

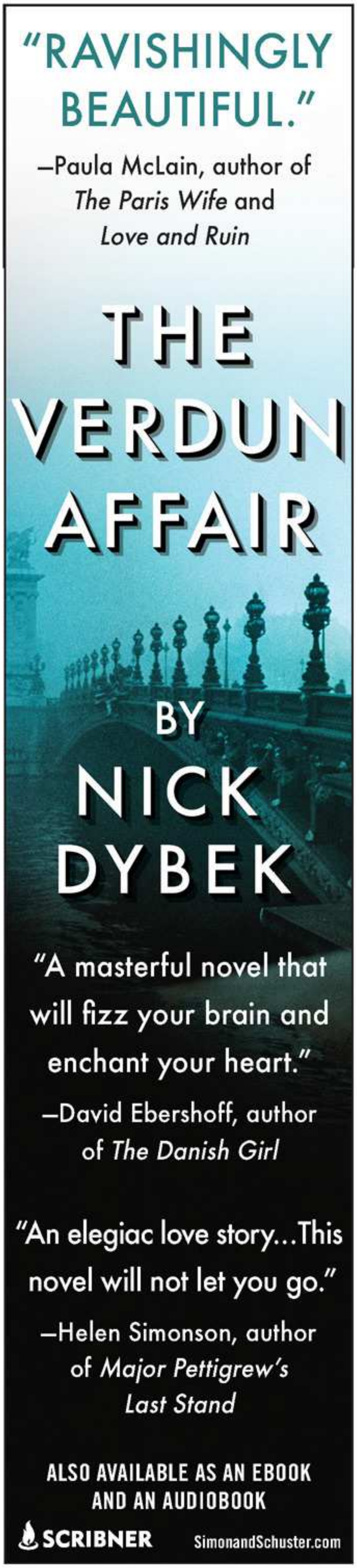
PRICE $8.99
THE NEW YORKER
JUNE 25, 2018


"ONCE ON THIS ISLAND COMES OUT ON TOP!"
The Hollywood Reporter
WINNER! TONY AWARD®
Best Musical Revival
"I LOVED IT!
With inventive stagecraft, it's an exultation in the power of storytelling."
BEN BRANTLEY, The New York Times
Critic's Pick
"RAVISHING!
WHAT A DELIGHT IT IS TO ENTER THE WORLD OF ONCE ON THIS ISLAND."
JESSE GREEN, The New York Times
"UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'LL SEE ON BROADWAY!
A place full of life and joy, where magic is possible and beauty is apparent for all to see."
DANNY GRONER, THE HUFFINGTON POST
ONCE ON THIS ISLAND
THE BROADWAY MUSICAL
Photo by Joan Marcus
OnceOnThisIsland.com | Telecharge.com | 212-239-6200 | Circle in the Square Theatre, 235 W. 50th St.

THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 25, 2018

DRAWINGS *Frank Cotham, Amy Hwang, Drew Dernavich, Roz Chast, P. C. Vey, Benjamin Schwartz, Pia Guerra, Edward Koren, Edward Steed, Seth Fleishman, David Sipress, Emily Flake, Joe Dator, Paul Noth, Sofia Warren, Bruce Eric Kaplan* SPOTS *Alain Pilon*



CONTRIBUTORS

Jon Lee Anderson (*"Mexico First," p. 40*), a staff writer, began contributing to the magazine in 1998. He is the author of several books, including "The Fall of Baghdad."

Liana Finck (*Sketchbook, p. 35*) has been contributing cartoons to *The New Yorker* since 2013. This work is from her graphic memoir "Passing for Human," which will be published in September.

Vinson Cunningham (*"Figure of Speech," p. 18*) has been a staff writer since 2016.

Leo Robson (*Books, p. 66*), a writer living in London, is a judge for the 2018 Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

Catherine Barnett (*Poem, p. 58*) will publish her third collection of poems, "Human Hours," in September.

Gary Shteyngart (*Fiction, p. 50*) is the author of "Super Sad True Love Story" and "Little Failure," among other books. His new novel, "Lake Success," will come out in September.

Ed Caesar (*"Scandal," p. 28*) is the author of "Two Hours: The Quest to Run the Impossible Marathon."

Amanda Petrusich (*"Prince's Lonely Palace," p. 24*) is a staff writer and the author of "Do Not Sell at Any Price: The Wild, Obsessive Hunt for the World's Rarest 78rpm Records."

Harry Bliss (*Cover*) has contributed cartoons and covers to the magazine since 1998. He is the founder of the Center for Cartoon Studies' Cornish Fellowship Residency for graphic novelists, in New Hampshire.

Naomi Fry (*The Talk of the Town, p. 15*) writes about pop culture for newyorker.com and became a staff writer this year.

Edward Hirsch (*Poem, p. 45*) most recently published the collection "Gabriel: A Poem."

Emily Nussbaum (*On Television, p. 72*), the magazine's television critic, won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for criticism.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM



VIDEO
David Remnick speaks with Maggie Haberman and Dean Baquet, of the *Times*, about truth, lies, and Trump.



THE SPORTING SCENE
Brian Phillips, Hua Hsu, Michael Luo, and other *New Yorker* writers find transcendence in the World Cup.

Download the New Yorker Today app for the latest news, commentary, criticism, and humor, plus this week's magazine and all issues back to 2008.

LEFT: QIN CHEN; RIGHT: CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

THE MAIL

DEFINING OUR WORLDS

I was in bed listening to my nine-month-old son stir when I read Mohsin Hamid's essay ("What Is Possible," June 4th & 11th). When Hamid was a young man, his father let him believe that whatever he imagined was possible. "I watched cartoons on our small black-and-white TV, a TV in which I always saw colors," he writes. A parent's decisions are often dictated by the daily grind: feeding, bathing, finding socks and shoes, slathering on sunscreen, doing laundry. It's easy to mistake these obligations for being a parent. My daughter, who is four, exists mostly in her own world. She loves to paint and collect bugs and examine every dandelion. It's magical and infuriating, especially when we're running late for swimming lessons. Hamid reminds us that kids tune in to the essence of things. Neatly folded laundry and clean countertops make me feel better. Hunting for worms and building fairy castles makes my child feel known. It's a lesson I need to keep learning over and over.
Cloe Axelson
Belmont, Mass.

For years, I have been making the argument that we need to stop calling people "white." Finally, someone agrees with me! Hamid, who is Pakistani, describes the mother of a friend as "what I suppose should be called European-American." Calling a group of people "white" gives them an edge over many other Americans. Except for Native Americans, all of us are either immigrants or descended from immigrants. Every American has a hyphenated identity, not just nonwhite people.
Robert Latzer
Charleston, S.C.

CLASSICS OF QUEER CINEMA

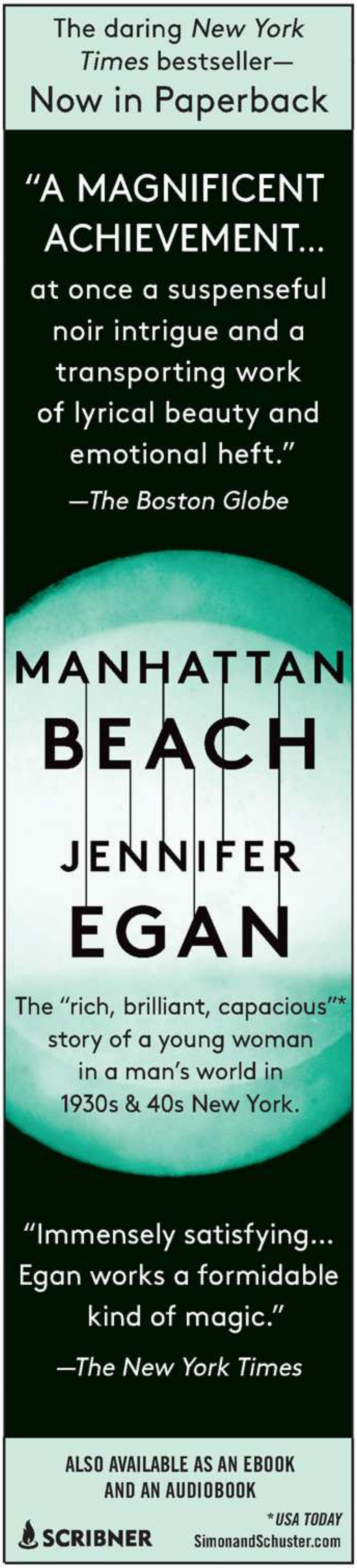
Rachel Kushner writes that when she hears the phrase "leather boys"—a reference to the 1964 movie "The Leather Boys"—"it's almost like hearing my name" ("The Leather Boys," June 4th & 11th). I know what she means. The movie, which features a gay motorcyclist in London and the Rocker subculture that he and his friend, played by Colin Campbell, explore, has a special place in my memory. I was a young leather boy who frequented the Ace and Busy Bee cafés back in the day, and my fellow-Rockers and I took part in some of the movie's scenes after Campbell lost his driver's license for a traffic infraction. All the outdoor sequences had to be shot on private grounds, including the Alexandra Palace roads in North London, where my pals and I hung out at a local tea-and-pie shop called Curlies, and were known as the Curly Boys. I had come to believe that the film was long forgotten, and I was elated to see it revived through Kushner's essay.
Mike Ryan
Oakville, Ont.

IN OUR NATURAL STATE

I was struck by the colorful cover of the Fiction Issue, by the twenty-three-year-old artist Loveis Wise, of a mother holding her child as she waters beautiful flowers ("Nurture," June 4th & 11th). My perception of the illustration is that the child is in the mother's care and protection, and will remain there during whatever activities her mother's day presents. An alternate title could have been "Inseparable." Right now, the United States is taking extraordinary actions to separate immigrant children from their families. The cover is a reminder of the natural relationship between child and parent, as opposed to the nightmarish circumstances imposed by government bureaucracy.
Donald Pearson
Coal Valley, Ill.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.





JUNE 20 – 26, 2018

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



Come summer, New York's great musical institutions rush outdoors to prove their democratic credentials. For the **Metropolitan Opera,** this means leaving its gilded precincts for the city's parks, with a series of free concerts headlined by gifted young singers like the soprano Gabriella Reyes de Ramírez. She and colleagues will present a selection of crowd-pleasers in Staten Island's Clove Lakes Park (June 21), the Bronx's Williamsbridge Oval (June 23), Harlem's Jackie Robinson Park (June 27), and the Socrates Sculpture Park, in Queens (June 29).

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAOLA KUDACKI

THE THEATRE

Everyone's Fine with Virginia Woolf
Abrons Arts Center

Elevator Repair Service's latest caper with a classic work of literature is an anarchic parody of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (with a couple of detours into "A Streetcar Named Desire"). Kate Scelsa's wacky script, directed by John Collins, blends gleefully artificial absurdist camp in the Charles Ludlam mode with wry feminist dramaturgy. Solid familiarity with Edward Albee's play is an absolute prerequisite for making sense of this show. Along with everything else—a robot, a vampire, a disquisition on slash fiction—the piece includes trenchant critiques of the way that Albee (and Tennessee Williams) wrote female characters, but recognizing them requires fighting through relentless torrents of archness. It helps that the actors jump in head first, especially Vin Knight, as George (and Blanche DuBois).—*Rollo Romig (Through June 30.)*

First Love
Cherry Lane

Part of a trilogy that also includes "Big Love" and "True Love," this Charles Mee play from 2001 gives us the time-lapse version of a relationship. Edith (Angelina Fiordellisi) and Harold (Michael O'Keefe) meet grumpy-cute on a park bench, then go on to date, have sex, discuss marriage, break up, and maybe get back together. That they are sixty-year-old veterans of past marriages makes things simultaneously easier and more complicated, because they know what lies ahead. Kim Weild's revival is not as brash as the original production, in which the lovebirds matter-of-factly got down to naked business. Instead, the show sometimes reduces older people getting physical, whether through dancing or sex, to a quirky oddity. What distinguishes this "First Love" is O'Keefe, who shades Harold with touches of wry misanthropy, and whose droll restraint evokes Bill Murray.—*Elisabeth Vincentelli (Through July 8.)*

Fruit Trilogy
Lucille Lortel

Ever since "The Vagina Monologues," Eve Ensler has had one main subject—women's relationships with their bodies—and she does not stray in this omnibus of short plays, deftly staged by Mark Rosenblatt. "Pomegranate" is a pale Beckettian amuse-bouche in which the disembodied heads of Liz Mikel and Kiersey Clemons are literally for sale. The latter returns in "Avocado," a harrowing monologue in which a woman recounts her descent into sexual slavery from within some kind of container, en route to either salvation or more horror; in a challenging role, Clemons makes remarkable hairpin turns, from girlishly giddy to disturbingly graphic. The charismatic Mikel ("Lysistrata Jones") bares nearly all, physically and emotionally, in the closer, "Coconut," in which a bath becomes a path to self-acceptance and body positivity, leading to a communal dance that may make some theatregoers rejoice and others cringe.—*E.V. (Through June 23.)*

Williamstown Theatre Festival

OUT OF TOWN The summertime theatre haven in the Berkshires kicks off with "The Closet" (June 26-July 14), a new comedy by Douglas Carter Beane ("The Little Dog Laughed"), directed by Mark Brokaw, in which a sashaying stranger (Brooks Ashmanskas) shakes up the lives of two co-workers (Matthew Broderick and Jessica Hecht). Later main-stage productions include the musical "Lempicka" (July 19-Aug. 1), written by Carson Kreitzer and Matt Gould and directed by Rachel Chavkin, which imagines the relationship between the Polish painter Tamara de Lempicka (Eden Espinosa) and a Parisian prostitute (Carmen Cusack); and a revival of Carson McCullers's "The Member of the Wedding" (Aug. 5-19), directed by Gaye Taylor Upchurch and featuring Tavi Gevinson. Nikos Stage offerings include Adam Rapp's "The Sound Inside" (June 27-July 8), directed by David Cromer and starring Mary-Louise Parker as an Ivy League professor. For the complete lineup, visit wtfestival.org.—*Michael Schulman*

MOVIES

The Catcher Was a Spy

Paul Rudd brings wry reserve and quiet purpose to the role of Moe Berg, a real-life major-league baseball player during the nineteen-twenties and thirties, and a multilingual Princeton graduate who played a crucial part in the Second World War. The movie, based on a true story, shows Berg—sent with such athletes as Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig on a prewar junket to Japan—undertaking some freelance espionage on behalf of the U.S. government. Then, when the war begins, Berg volunteers for service and is sent to Europe to determine whether the German physicist Werner Heisenberg

OFF BROADWAY

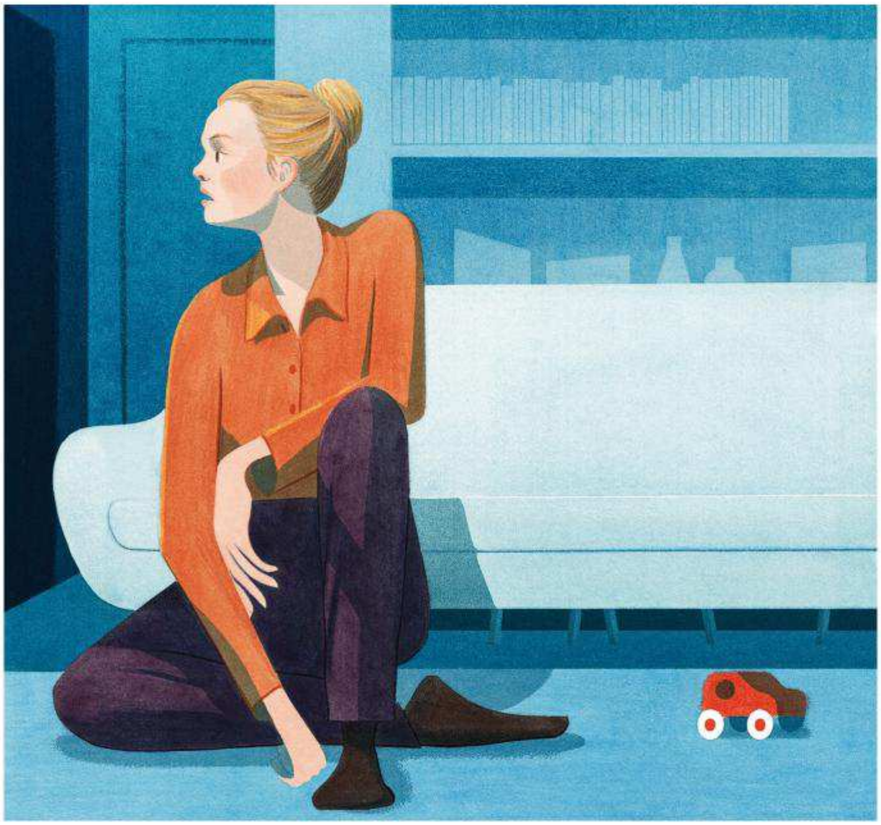


ILLUSTRATION BY ELENI KALORKOTI

Most unlikely theatrical player of 2018: Audible, the Amazon-owned audio-content purveyor. The company has taken up residence at the Minetta Lane Theatre, where this spring it produced "Harry Clarke," a one-man play starring Billy Crudup as a seductive impostor; audiences could see the show live or download it as an audio drama. Next up is **"Girls & Boys"** (opening June 20), a solo play by Dennis Kelly, which traces the life and shattering demise of a marriage between two people who meet at the Naples airport. Carey Mulligan stars in Lyndsey Turner's production, which originated at London's Royal Court.—*Michael Schulman*

(Mark Strong) is attempting to build an atomic bomb—and, if so, to kill him. The script, by Robert Rodat, skips around in time to elucidate the amped-up drama, but it never gets close to Berg's own character. The film, directed by Ben Lewin, strongly suggests that Berg was gay, but leaves the theme undeveloped.—*Richard Brody (In limited release and streaming.)*

Damsel

The Zellner brothers, David and Nathan, wrote and directed this Western near-parody; though methodically conceived and occasionally tense, it's slight and sluggish. A dudish gunslinger named Samuel Alabaster (Robert Pattinson) arrives in a rugged frontier town and recruits the timid Parson Henry (David Zellner) for a journey into the deep country to rescue his kidnapped fiancée, Penelope (Mia Wasikowska). On the hazardous trail, Samuel has a showdown with the kidnapper's murderous brother, Rufus (Nathan Zellner); as the mission advances, Samuel presses the clergyman into unwilling marksmanship, and their plans take a chaotic turn. The Zellners have a mission of their own—to deflate the starry-eyed romanticism of a male savior and reveal its violent arrogance—and they fulfill it with deft twists and sardonic, gory humor. Some arch lines of dialogue recall the curlicued idioms of the Coen brothers' scripts, and a few iconic gestures lend the bedraggled adventure a mythic dimension, but the Zellners' big ideas remain theoretical.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

Hereditary

Ari Aster's first feature is a claustrophobic affair, so much so that some of its scenes are restaged inside a doll's house. Toni Collette, who thrived on the trauma of "The Sixth Sense" (1999), plays Annie, who shares her creaky—and, needless to say, poorly lit—home with her saturnine husband, Steve (Gabriel Byrne), and their teen-age children, Peter (Alex Wolff) and Charlie (Milly Shapiro). Also present, in spirit, is Annie's mother, who recently died. Some of the activities that we witness, like a tabletop séance conducted by a medium (Ann Dowd), are standard tropes of the spooky-horror genre, as are the shocks that gather pace toward the climax, but Aster's emphasis is on the dysfunction of the family, and on the soul-warping that is passed down through the generations. Collette and Shapiro, particularly, offer memorable portraits of a malaise that seems beyond cure.—*Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 6/18/18.) (In wide release.)*

Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom

All is not well on the volcanic island where—unwisely, in retrospect—Jurassic World opened its gates to visitors. The whole place is about to erupt, and as many dinosaurs as possible must be shipped out. The task falls to Owen (Chris Pratt) and Claire (Bryce Dallas Howard), whose efforts are underwritten by a rich recluse named Lockwood (James Cromwell)—a good guy, unlike some of his employees. As ever, the film is faced with the problem of villainy: even when the beasts are unstoppably hostile, they're not being wicked. They're just doing what they do. The human baddies, however, seem like small fry. The director is J. A. Bayona, who is stuck with the lumbering demands of the franchise, and yet, in one terrific sequence, involving a small child and a giant claw, he plucks at our nerves as skillfully as he did in "The Orphanage" (2007). With Toby Jones.—*A.L. (In wide release.)*

Nancy

The writer and director Christina Choe constructs an extraordinary story and unites a formidable cast to bring it to life, but the premise remains stronger than the results. Andrea Riseborough plays Nancy Freeman, a lonely thirtysomething unpublished writer who lives with and cares for her ailing mother (Ann Dowd). After her mother's sudden death, Nancy sees a TV news report about a middle-aged couple (J. Smith-Cameron and Steve Buscemi) whose five-year-old daughter vanished thirty years ago; Nancy contacts them, claiming to be their long-lost child. Her connection with the couple, two academically accomplished intellectuals, offers her an instantaneous new life, albeit one that runs on a fragile thread of deception. The actors fling themselves into the roles with fervor, but the movie's emotional range fluctuates indiscriminately between the blatant and the retentive. The action is distilled to ostensibly significant details, but they prove psychologically and dramatically unilluminating.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

IN THE BERKSHIRES



First up at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, in Becket, Mass., is the **Royal Danish Ballet,** a troupe founded in the mid-eighteenth century—making it one of the oldest in the world. Where Russia had Marius Petipa, Denmark had August Bournonville, who choreographed in a joyful, buoyant, full-bodied style. At the Ted Shawn Theatre June 20-24, the Danes perform excerpts from the Bournonville gems "La Sylphide," "The Kermesse in Bruges," and "A Folktale." In the smaller Doris Duke Theatre, the Minneapolis-based Ragamala Dance Company presents "Written in Water," an evening of classical Indian dance set to a live score that combines Carnatic music and jazz.—*Marina Harss*

ILLUSTRATION BY REBEKKA DUNLAP

DANCE

American Ballet Theatre
Metropolitan Opera House

Is there a work more synonymous with ballet than "Swan Lake"? A.B.T.'s production is opulent, with attractive sets and costumes, but rather bland in its over-all impression. Its main eccentricity is the way it divides the role of the villain—the evil sorcerer Von Rothbart—into two parts, one a handsome danseur in purple thigh-high boots, the other a green bog monster fitted with reptilian wings. But the reason to return to "Swan Lake" is to see new dancers take on the tricky double role of Odette and Odile, tragic heroine in one act, self-possessed seductress in the next. Poor Prince Siegfried, caught in the middle, doesn't stand a chance. The six casts include Devon Teuscher (a dancer with an innate sense of scale), Isabella Boylston (impulsive and musical), and Gillian Murphy (bold and stylish).—*Marina Harss (June 18-23. Through July 7.)*

Madboots / Sean Dorsey Dance
Joyce Theatre

Of the two proudly queer groups sharing a week at the Joyce, Madboots is the slicker

enterprise, packaging expansions of masculinity in modish virtuosity and youthful beauty. "Gay Guerrilla," a première, extracts menace and bravery, as well as a title, from the fierce minimalism of the recently rediscovered composer Julius Eastman. The transgender choreographer Sean Dorsey is much more earnest. Drawing from painful recorded interviews with survivors of the AIDS epidemic, "The Missing Generation" is a fully embodied history lesson in which four dancers hold one another up.—*Brian Seibert (June 19-23.)*

Mark Morris Dance Group
International Festival of Arts & Ideas

OUT OF TOWN In the sixties, when Mark Morris's sisters were crazy for the Beatles, he was more into flamenco. But it seems that he has embraced Beatlemania at last, in his own way. "Pepperland," which premièred in Liverpool last year, was made to mark the fiftieth anniversary of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." But don't expect to bop along to "When I'm Sixty-Four." In fact, Morris uses no actual songs from the album but, rather, reinterpretations by the jazz experimentalist Ethan Iverson, simultaneously familiar and strange. At this annual festival in New Haven, Conn., the score will be played live by an ensemble that includes a theremin, a harpsichord, and an organ. Similarly, the dance both alludes to and keeps a certain distance from the poppy ambiance of the swinging sixties.—*M.H. (June 21-22.)*

"THEM"
Performance Space New York

At its 1986 début, this intense vision of gay youth and its confusions was haunted by the AIDS crisis and instantly notorious for a climactic love scene involving a blindfold, a mattress, and a dead goat. But the whole production—the distortion of Chris Cochrane's guitar, the benumbed observations of Dennis Cooper's text, the urgent roughhousing of Ishmael Houston-Jones's choreography—mixes up love and violence with a disturbing honesty. Its revival should help Performance Space New York reconnect to its past as P.S. 122.—*B.S. (June 21-28.)*

ART

Robert Bittenbender
Lomex

DOWNTOWN The artist is barely thirty, but his found-object assemblages and pushpin-laden paintings have the same scabrous heart, if not quite the same nerve, as Beat-era Bruce Conner. The magpie formalism of works like "Alphabet Soup"—an implosion of zip ties, junk-store jewelry, and die-cut and plastic lettering—also feels nostalgic for the East Village scene of the nineteen-eighties. The gallery's intimate layout and domestic flourishes (a carved wooden mantel) serve Bittenbender's not-of-this-time allure. What does attune his show to 2018 is its anxious, upcycled mood.—*Andrea K. Scott (Through June 24.)*

Marlene Dumas
Zwirner

CHELSEA The South African-born artist's blotchy figurative paintings in discouraging colors can repel at first, but they wear well as the strength of her passions kicks in. The themes here are erotic: big standing figures, seen nude or vamping, and small sensual faces, some of them kissing. The show generates a cumulative sense of libido as a magnetizing preoccupation and frequent ordeal, forcing itself on the artist as (if less boldly acknowledged) it does on us all. A suite of illustrations in runny ink of Shakespeare's wildly sexy "Venus and Adonis" succeeds, against all odds, through moody immersion in the comedy of the goddess's lust and the youth's recalcitrance, ending in a tragedy of love and death.—*Peter Schjeldahl (Through June 30.)*

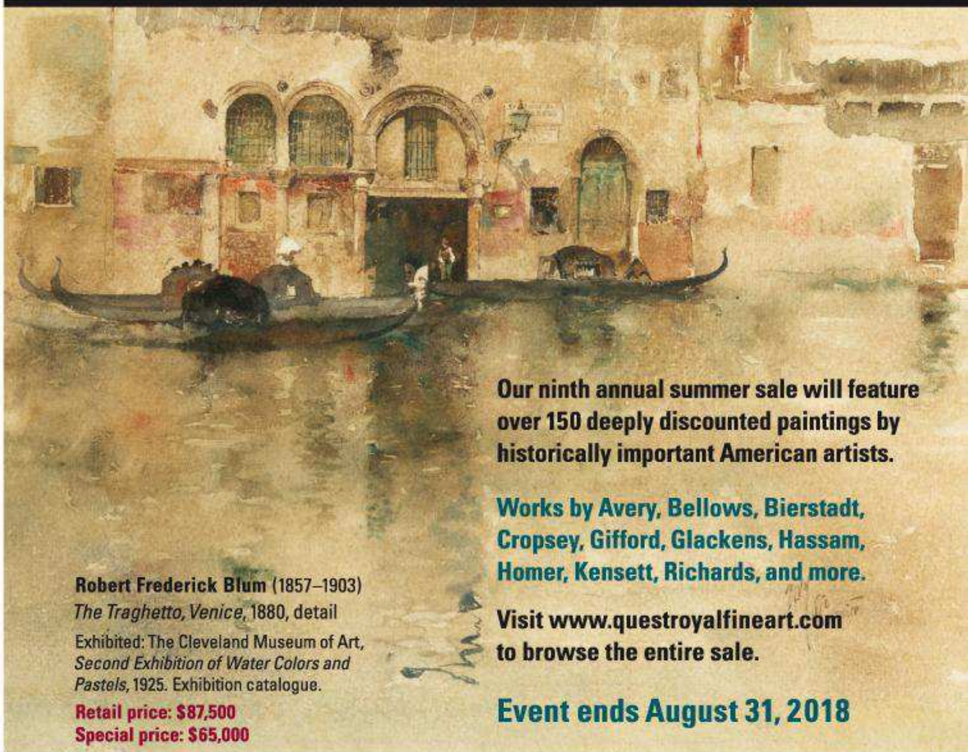
Frank Heath
Subal

DOWNTOWN This deadpan take on end-time scenarios—three videos unspooling over forty minutes—is part PBS-style documentary, part "Punk'd." Visit a decommissioned bunker under a hotel in West Virginia, built to accommodate members of Congress in the case of a nuclear blast. Travel to Missouri, on the occasion of last year's total solar eclipse, where a kosher tour group prepares to witness Hashem's creation and a young woman believes that war on U.S. soil is imminent. See the Global Seed Vault, in Norway, which duplicates seed banks around the world; learn that recent attacks on Aleppo depleted a third of the Syrian inventory. Hear a call-center employee grow increasingly frustrated with a customer's story of apocalyptic visions.—*A.K.S. (Through June 24.)*

Damien Hirst
Gagosian

CHELSEA Superabundant multicolored dot paintings, randomly composed in sizes from smallish to giant, are as perfectly dead as a trisected shark in formaldehyde-filled glass cases, which is also on view. There's no formal structure or even optical dazzle, except by occasional accident. These aren't active pictures. They're passive slabs, yielding nothing to contemplation that they don't impart at first glance. Neither good nor bad, they maintain an imperturbable, mortuary dignity—Hirst's cynosure. He creates visual curios that look like art while dispensing with art's pesky demands on thought, feeling, and perception. His works are aesthetic cryptocurrency. There are worse things in the world.—*P.S. (Through June 30.)*

SOMETIMES DREAMS GO ON SALE



Robert Frederick Blum (1857–1903)
The Traghetto, Venice, 1880, detail
Exhibited: The Cleveland Museum of Art, *Second Exhibition of Water Colors and Pastels*, 1925. Exhibition catalogue.
Retail price: $87,500
Special price: $65,000

Our ninth annual summer sale will feature over 150 deeply discounted paintings by historically important American artists.

Works by Avery, Bellows, Bierstadt, Cropsey, Gifford, Glackens, Hassam, Homer, Kensett, Richards, and more.

Visit www.questroyalfineart.com to browse the entire sale.

Event ends August 31, 2018

QUESTROYAL FINE ART, LLC
Important American Paintings
(212) 744-3586 New York, NY gallery@questroyalfineart.com www.questroyalfineart.com

IN THE MUSEUMS



"I wasn't aware that was something a person could do," trills King George III, in "Hamilton," on learning that George Washington will give up the helm of the United States. In 1816, North Carolina commissioned Europe's leading sculptor, Antonio Canova, to memorialize the event. The marble carving perished in a fire in 1831; the Frick borrows the artist's full-scale plaster version from Italy for the richly detailed historical show **"Canova's George Washington"** (through Sept. 23). The President sits in imperial Roman garb—at the suggestion of Thomas Jefferson—and gazes into space, like a poet seeking inspiration, as he starts to compose his Farewell Address. The rendering, by a neoclassical master overdue for reappraisal, is a tad daffily idealized, but also beautiful and, perhaps, stirring. As on Broadway recently, we remember a man who earned immense authority and gave it away for the sake of a newfangled nation.—*Peter Schjeldahl*

Curtis Talwst Santiago / Hilary Pecis
Uffner

DOWNTOWN Two artists offer fresh visions of a mythic past (Santiago) and a charmed present (Pecis). Santiago's bright landscapes and dioramas—tiny scenes housed in vintage jewelry boxes—concern an imagined ancestor, inspired by the African knights portrayed in paintings of the Portuguese Renaissance. The Canadian artist, who lives in Lisbon, also brings his personal Avalon to life with larger sculptures, fictional artifacts including a beaded suit of armor. There is a studious yet playful realism at work in Pecis's paintings of L.A., from street corners to a natural-history-museum display of raptors. The compositions—interlocking fields of matte color—have a cartographic quality and also recall paint-by-numbers. Pecis has a knack for sun-dappled surfaces, and she anchors her scenes with specific details. In "Camellias," a vase of flowers rests atop books whose subjects are a set of keys: Betty Woodman, Eva Hesse, Georgia O'Keeffe.—*Johanna Fateman (Through June 24.)*

Marianne Vitale
Invisible Exports

DOWNTOWN Rusted-steel brackets and braces become creaturelike faces when the New York artist mounts them on the wall. (How eager we are to assign narrative meaning.) The train-engine parts that Vitale repurposed for the grand "Skull" have been anthropomorphized with a heavier hand; with its flat orifices, the face feels more like a fixture. Vitale's "Totems"—handsome columns made of vintage railroad tracks—would seem to be the least playful objects on view. But take a peek in the gallery office and you'll see photographs of the sculptures printed on vinyl, to be arranged like a child's Colorforms set.—*J.F. (Through June 24.)*

"Evidence"
Metro Pictures

CHELSEA Josh Kline, an American sculptor with a strong social conscience, organized this terrific group show with one eye on the formal virtues of art and the other on skewering political vices. "Post-truth America" is the target here. Allyson Vieira establishes a mood of crumbling infrastructure at the outset: viewers enter the show through a slit in a wall of red-and-blue construction netting, as if being protected from falling debris. (She also exhibits five exuberant sculptural arrows.) In Paul Pfeiffer's mordant digital videos, game-show contestants become Sisyphean with anticipation, always waiting, never winning or losing. Liz Magic Laser suggests that the red state–blue state divide is exhausted, in an ash-gray installation incorporating footage of psychiatric patients (played by actors) with varying political views in a padded room. In the most startling piece here, choreographed and filmed by Gloria Maximo, a young woman alone in a car performs a cryptic but urgent ritual.—*A.K.S. (Through June 24.)*

NIGHT LIFE

Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.

David Murray & Class Struggle
Village Vanguard

Though less conspicuous than he was a few decades ago—is there anyone who's actually made their way through the relentless tsunami of recordings that Murray appeared on in the eighties and nineties?—the fire-breathing saxophonist and bass-clarinet player remains a force to be reckoned with. His Class Struggle sextet has some trusted peak-era collaborators, including the trombonist Craig Harris and Murray's son, Mingus, on guitar.—*Steve Futterman (June 19-24.)*

Alternative Guitar Summit 2018
Various locations

Proving that there's life in the old six-string yet, a host of farsighted guitarists gather for three nights of in-the-moment music-making. Opening night features the innovative Bill Frisell at Le Poisson Rouge, collaborating with several players, including Julian Lage. The festival continues at Nublu, with a fusion tribute featuring Brandon Ross, Dave Fiuczynski, and others, and concludes at Jazz Gallery, with an evening of cross-generational duets uniting Peter Bernstein and Gilad Hekselman, Joe Morris and Matteo Liberatore, and Anthony Pirog and the festival director, Joel Harrison.—*S.F. (June 21-23.)*

Amen Dunes
Brooklyn Steel

On his fourth album, "Freedom," Damon McMahon—a conjurer of psychedelic folk who records under the moniker Amen Dunes—sings abstractly about people from his past

GYPSOTHECA E MUSEO ANTONIO CANOVA AND FONDAZIONE CANOVA ONLUS, POSSAGNO

and his present. This isn't unusual, but the characters he spins his yarns about are, to quote him, a mix of "Parisian drug dealers, ghosts above the plains, fallen surf heroes, and vampires." McMahon's music brims with inventive rhythms and angular melodies, yet it's his vibrato tenor voice that stands out most, with its capacity to chill and to charm within the same verse.—*Paula Mejia (June 23.)*

Floating Points
Analog BKNY

The U.K. d.j. and producer Sam Shepherd, a.k.a. Floating Points, may have left a career in neuroscience behind, but the particular field of research in which he earned his Ph.D.—epigenetics—has parallels with his music's impact on revellers in clubland. As he described the field some years ago, "It's all about modulation and subtle changes in cell behavior that can have drastic effects." Shepherd's d.j. sets can be wide-ranging, but often what holds them together is a jazzy streak—evident in his preferred drum sounds—and an infatuation with the harmonic derring-do of Brazilian pop.—*K. Leander Williams (June 23.)*

The Sun Ra Arkestra
Union Pool

An innovator who made the swing of Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson at home with the otherworldly sounds of the avant-garde, the Afrofuturist bandleader Sun Ra continually reinvigorated jazz composition and live performance from the mid-fifties until his death, in 1993. He lives on in the form of this collective, which has gone by various names over the years—Sun Ra and His Intergalactic Research Arkestra, the Solar Myth Arkestra. The band still performs clad in elaborate costumes—sparkly tunics and headdresses—and onstage the players can be riotous. Marshall Allen, a saxophonist and a founding member, is ninety-four and shows no signs of tiring. This free show takes place at noon.—*K.L.W. (June 23.)*

Tuskegee with Seth Troxler and the Martinez Brothers
Brooklyn Mirage

Named for the Alabama H.B.C.U., Tuskegee Records—the dance-music label jointly run by Troxler, a Detroit native, and the Martinez Brothers, of the Bronx—is a platform for electronic artists of color. The hour-long d.j. set that the label uploaded to SoundCloud last year ("Output Promo Mix 2017") was buoyant, sly, funky, airily percussive, and aggressively playful, like a cat chasing a laser beam across the speakers. At the Brooklyn Mirage, the d.j.s will play back to back ("b2b," in clubber parlance) from the 4 P.M. opening until midnight, when the doors close.—*Michaelangelo Matos (June 24.)*

TEN with Terri Lyne Carrington, Esperanza Spalding, and Nicholas Payton
Murmrr Theatre

Some musicians are seemingly born for the contentious times they end up working in. The coöperative TEN unites the drummer Carrington, the bassist and singer Spalding, and the trumpeter and keyboardist Payton, three superlative players who also happen to have a lot on their minds when it comes to social justice, racial and gender equality, and musical historiography. Payton, as he surely knows, should expect no mercy

HIP-HOP, ELECTRONIC, AND DANCE



ILLUSTRATION BY PETRA ERIKSSON

If this is the age of acrimony, **Azealia Banks** has become one of its more reliable avatars in the music business. The dance-floor diva's Twitter beefs with, oh, just about everybody might engender dismissal if her vocals—whether she's rhyming or singing—weren't so fluent and the bounce in her tracks didn't transport listeners to some kind of pelvic heaven. The title of Banks's latest single, "Anna Wintour," seems right in line with the materialist boasts in its rap section ("I'm penthouse; you're trap house and rhinestones"), but the chorus reveals a layer of vulnerability nonexistent in the singer's tweets. She's no longer "broke with expensive taste," but at least she seems to know that diamonds aren't a girl's dearest friend. On June 22 at Sony Hall, her Rainbow Ball gets started around midnight.—*K. Leander Williams*



Anna Netrebko as Adriana Lecouvreur

Don't miss the Met's exciting new season, featuring four new productions, and the return of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. Learn how to save on tickets at metopera.org/cyo.*

metopera.org 212.362.6000

The Metropolitan Opera

*Discount does not apply to *Ring* cycle performances, and performances must be purchased in a single transaction for discount to apply.

PHOTO: VINCENT PETERS/METROPOLITAN OPERA

from TEN's crack rhythm team, which jelled with the late, great pianist Geri Allen.—*S.F.* *(June 25.)*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

"Songs of David Del Tredici and Eric Moe"
National Sawdust

In the nineteen-sixties and seventies, when atonality still maintained its stranglehold on classical composers, David Del Tredici rebelled by writing unabashedly tonal music in an exuberant neo-Romantic style. For this concert, the versatile tenor Rob Frankenberry and the pianist and composer Eric Moe highlight two of Del Tredici's preoccupations—Lewis Carroll's Alice novels and the exigencies of contemporary gay life—with a selection of songs at once lyrical, poignant, and mischievous (including two entries from the cycle "My Favorite Penis Poems"). The program also features Moe's "& a Warm Hello from the Alien Ant Farm," a cycle that vibrates along the neighboring frequencies of Broadway, jazz, and art song.—*Oussama Zahr (June 20 at 7.)*

Peter Evans
Areté Venue and Gallery

Evans, a trumpeter of jaw-dropping facility and imagination, has established himself as a force to be reckoned with in both contemporary-classical and free-jazz circles. Performing with a like-minded cohort that includes the violinist Mazz Swift, the keyboardist Ron Stabinsky, and the percussionist Shayna Dunkelman, he presents new pieces and discusses their workings with Jeremiah Cymerman, a similarly versatile musician who hosts the 5049 Podcast and this new concert series.—*Steve Smith (June 20 at 8.)*

American Composers Orchestra
Frederick Loewe Theatre

The annual Underwood New Music Readings provide emerging composers with an opportunity to hear their work played by seasoned professionals and to receive feedback from established mentors—first in a free, pre-noon open rehearsal, and then in an inexpensive, more polished evening presentation. This year's participants are Carlos Bandera, Lily Chen, Scott Lee, Ryan Lindveit, Tomàs Peire Serrate, and Liliya Ugay. Two of them will win commissions for new pieces that the orchestra will play next season; George Manahan conducts.—*S.S. (June 21 at 10:30 A.M. and June 22 at 7:30.)*

GESAMTKUNSTWERK



Alberto Savinio was something of a latter-day Renaissance man—an artist, a composer, and a writer who ran with Apollinaire, Picasso, and the rest of the Parisian avant-garde in the nineteen-tens. Later he left for Italy, where he founded the Metaphysical school with his more famous brother, the painter Giorgio de Chirico. To accompany an exhibition of Savinio's paintings, the Center for Italian Modern Art has unearthed a peculiar artifact of those heady times: his short, absurdist **"Les Chants de la Mi-Mort"** ("Songs of the Half-Dead"), a dramatic scene for piano, soprano, and baritone, chock-full of wacky glissandos and proto-brutalist touches, which will be performed at Issue Project Room on June 21. An excerpt from Nick Hallett's opera-in-progress, "To Music," about a composer's adventures on social media, rounds out the evening.—*Oussama Zahr*

ILLUSTRATION BY NIV BAVARSKY

Caramoor

OUT OF TOWN The refined Katonah, N.Y., arts center continues its summer programming with a varied palette of music ranging from the seventeenth century to the present day. First, on Thursday, the energetic young string players of the Verona Quartet couple the passionate Romanticism of Janáček's "Intimate Letters" with the first airing of a commission from the up-and-coming composer Julia Adolphe. (They also perform music by Dvořák.) The following day, a quartet of a different sort, Sō Percussion, presents a selection of contemporary works, including another world première, this one by the jazz pianist Vijay Iyer. Then, on Sunday, the Cleveland-based chamber collective Apollo's Fire plays favorites from the Baroque repertoire, including two double concertos: Bach's, for violin and oboe, BMV 1060; and one by Vivaldi, for two cellos, RV 531.—*Fergus McIntosh (June 21 at 7; June 22 at 8; June 24 at 4.)*

Robert Honstein
Tenri Cultural Institute

Making much out of seemingly little is the central thesis of "An Economy of Means," an arresting new compilation from the invaluable New Focus Recordings label, which features two appropriately thrifty pieces by Honstein, a Boston-based composer of smart, appealing works. Here, those pieces—one for vibraphone, the other for piano—are played by the musicians who recorded them: the percussionist Doug Perkins and the pianist Karl Larson.—*S.S. (June 23 at 8.)*

READINGS AND TALKS

Nell Irvin Painter
Greenlight Bookstore

Retirement has been breezy, relatively speaking, for Painter, a noted historian. In contrast to her 2010 race study, "The History of White People," Painter's new memoir, "Old in Art School," chronicles the former Princeton professor's late-life pursuit of first a B.F.A., then an M.F.A. Painter talks with the *Times* editor Clay Risen about the transition from academia to creative life.—*K. Leander Williams (June 25 at 7:30.)*

Salman Rushdie
Strand Book Store

Rushdie's latest novel, "The Golden House," gets under way on the day of the Obama Inauguration, but it's not nostalgic for a time of hope. Nero Golden, the ominously named central character, is a billionaire from India who moves to Greenwich Village with his adult sons in tow—a family with the requisite share of secrets. Rushdie teases out his gilded epic with a relationship between the Goldens and a filmmaker who is studying them for a project. The writer discusses the work in the Strand's Rare Book Room.—*K.L.W. (June 26 at 7.)*

For more reviews, visit
newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town



PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC HELGAS FOR THE NEW YORKER; ILLUSTRATION BY JOOST SWARTE

TABLES FOR TWO

Una Pizza Napoletana

Lower East Side

In the past fifteen years in this city, Neapolitan-style pizza has gone from rarefied regional specialty to adopted staple, practically inescapable: on Second Avenue in the East Village, a sandwich board in front of an outpost of a mini-chain called Neapolitan Express advertises a two-for-one deal. Any analysis of how this happened must consider Anthony Mangieri, the blustery, self-taught *pizzaiolo* from the Jersey shore, one of the first in the U.S. to devote himself slavishly to the craft, using naturally leavened dough, imported ingredients, and a wood-fired oven. When he moved his restaurant to Manhattan, in 2004, he declared his pizza better than any not only in New York but in Naples, too. Call it hyperbole, but competitors scrambled to reach his high bar.

In 2009, he paved their way by taking his talents to San Francisco. As of a couple of months ago, he's back, reseizing territory. Caged in glass at the rear of his bright, cleanly tiled new dining room, he plays each round of dough as though it were a bongo drum. Out of the oven, the tangy, stretchy starch, mottled with bubbles, quivers with heat, quieting as it cools. Toppings are spare: barely melted cubes of mozzarella affumicata, thick and chewy with just a hint of smoke, clustered with half-deflated cherry tomatoes and finished with fresh arugula. A tart, thin, puréed marinara gets nothing but a glug of grassy olive oil and a sprinkling of basil and oregano, redolent of a garden. It's peak pizza.

Mangieri is armed, this time, with two secret weapons: formidable partners in Jeremiah Stone and Fabián von Hauske Valtierra, the chef-owners of nearby Wildair and Contra, responsible for small plates and dessert. Together, the trio have created a place exceptional enough that charging twenty-five dollars for a twelve-inch pizza doesn't seem outlandish. The small plates are admirably ambitious, if a tad cerebral. A compact antipasto, featuring a disk of ricotta draped with a single anchovy, a tangle of wild broccoli rabe, and half of a jammy-yolked boiled egg, looked, one night, as though it had been composed with tweezers. A mound of cold, sweet raw lobster, ground fine, became a luscious sort of sauce when mixed with the wreath of chickpeas, minced celery, lemon zest, and parsley around it.

Desserts, though, set a new standard, Mangieri style. The surface of a buttery panna cotta, pooled with lakes of olive oil and cherry juice and ringed with piped puffs of cherry mousse, looked like a planet I'd like to live on. It seems silly to use the word "vanilla" pejoratively once you've tried von Hauske Valtierra's ice cream, as smooth and thick as gelato: thrillingly salty yet exquisitely balanced, with a tantalizing note of toasted marshmallow. On a recent evening, a diner put down her spoon and said the magic words: "Better than Italy." *(175 Orchard St. 646-692-3475. Pizzas $25.)*

—*Hannah Goldfield*



BAR TAB

Loopy Doopy Rooftop Bar

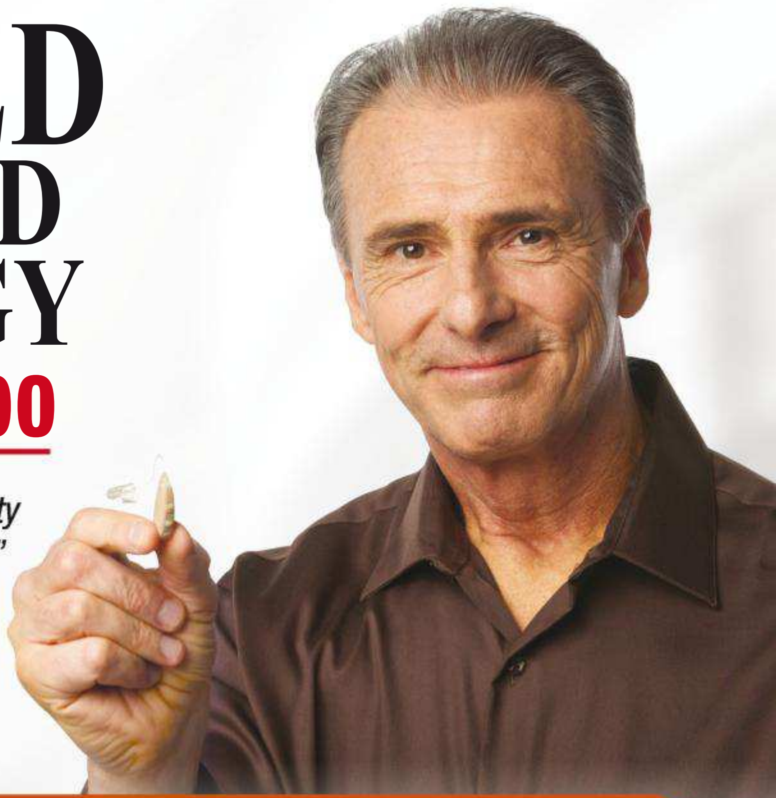
Battery Park City

The popsicle was an American eleven-year-old's idea. By 1923, that child was an adult with kids who called him Pop, and, behold, the popsicle, summer's wholesome pleasure, was born. Not wholesome as in nutritional, but as in conjuring, for adults, an era in which their bodies were pure instruments of chasing after ice-cream trucks—having not yet grown up to be convinced, by svelte promotional material on social media, that nil-calorie frozen dessert successfully duplicates the original. The promise of Loopy Doopy, atop the Conrad Hotel, is childhood's reprisal. Here, select a fruity (liquored) popsicle to be plopped into a giant glass of rosécco. Pay twenty-four dollars, plus tip, for this. Ponder the potential inefficiencies of a whiskey popsicle as an alcohol-delivery system. Inquire with a waitress about its booziness—"It's, like, a drink," she'll say. Discover, with unjaded delight, that you have essentially received two beverages—more is more, for the unrestrained child. A popsicle in wine dissolves as promptly as girlhood, so enjoy the pooling ("organic") sugar. Try a complimentary carrot "chip," oiled and crisp—yes, for you with the immature palate, the vegetables are disguised! Giggle, maybe, at the bar's name, which sounds as if it were commissioned from a toddler, yet marvel that you are truly having a lovely time: the drink is delicious, and the Hudson River, adjacent, is divine. As the clouds melt into the color of strawberry ice cream, your glass still half full, take a picture with your phone. Put it in an Instagram story. Let it loop for your fans. It's a metaphor, you think, for life's recursiveness, for the perpetual possibility of returning to childhood—or have you just had too much to drink? Close Instagram. Check your bank account. If only you were eleven again. *(102 North End Ave. 646-769-4250.)*

—*Elizabeth Barber*

ADVANCED HEARING AID TECHNOLOGY

For Less Than $200



***"I have been amazed…** by the quality of the sound and the improvement in my life."*

— Wayne S., Sharon, CT

How can a hearing aid that costs less than $200 be every bit as good as one that sells for $2,250 or more?

The answer: Although tremendous strides have been made in Advanced Hearing Aid Technology, those cost reductions have not been passed on to you. Until now...

MDHearingAid® uses the same kind of Advanced Hearing Aid Technology incorporated into hearing aids that cost thousands more at a small fraction of the price.

Over 300,000 satisfied **MDHearingAid** customers agree: High-quality, FDA-registered hearing aids don't have to cost a fortune. The fact is, you don't need to spend thousands for a hearing aid. **MDHearingAid** is a medical-grade hearing aid offering sophistication and high performance, and works right out of the box with no time-consuming "adjustment" appointments. You can contact a licensed hearing specialist conveniently online or by phone — even after your purchase at no cost. No other company provides such extensive support. Now that you know...why pay more?

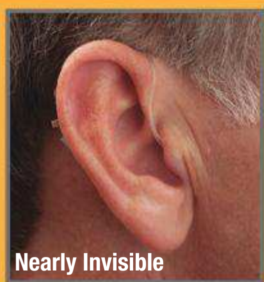
Can a Hearing Aid Delay or Prevent Alzheimer's and Dementia?

A study by the National Institute on Aging suggests older individuals with hearing loss are significantly more likely to develop Alzheimer's and dementia over time than those who retain their hearing. They suggest that an intervention — such as a hearing aid — could delay or prevent this by improving hearing!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR

45-DAY RISK-FREE TRIAL!

Hearing is believing and we invite you to try this nearly invisible hearing aid with no annoying whistling or background noise for yourself. If you are not completely satisfied with your MDHearingAid, return it within 45 days for a **FULL REFUND.**



Nearly Invisible

BUY A PAIR AND SAVE!

BATTERIES INCLUDED!

READY TO USE RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX!

For the Lowest Price Call

1-800-671-9160

www.GetMDHearingAid200.com

Use Code **HV75**

and get **FREE** Batteries for 1 Year

Plus **FREE** Shipping

Proudly assembled in America!

BBB A+ ACCREDITED BUSINESS

MDHearingAid®

DOCTOR DESIGNED | AUDIOLOGIST TESTED | FDA REGISTERED



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
GOING ROGUE

When President Trump walked out early from the meeting of the Group of Seven in Charlevoix, Quebec, on June 9th, he left the group's collective statement without an American signature. It was hardly a controversial document—the language was G-7 boilerplate, affirming "our shared values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and our commitment to promote a rules-based international order." U.S. officials had negotiated a change in that last phrase from the definite article to an indefinite one—apparently, "the rules-based international order" threatened American sovereignty. But Trump still refused to sign. A spat with Canada over steel and aluminum tariffs had fouled his mood, and as he was leaving Canadian airspace the President insulted his host, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, calling him "dishonest" and "weak." Air Force One flew on to Singapore, where Trump lavished time and enthusiasm on the North Korean tyrant Kim Jong Un—"a very talented man" and a "funny guy" with a "great personality."

Dean Acheson, President Truman's Secretary of State, called his autobiography "Present at the Creation." The title referred to the task that confronted American leaders at the end of the Second World War and the start of the Cold War, which was "just a bit less formidable than that described in the first chapter of Genesis," Acheson wrote. "That was to create a world out of chaos; ours, to create half a world, a free half, out of the same material without blowing the whole to pieces in the process." A network of institutions and alliances—the United Nations, NATO, the international monetary system, and others—became the foundation for "the rules-based international order" that the leaders in Charlevoix saluted. It imposed restraints on the power politics that had nearly destroyed the world. It was a liberal order, based on coöperation among countries and respect for individual rights, and it was created and upheld by the world's leading liberal democracy. America's goals weren't selfless, and we often failed to live up to our stated principles. Power politics didn't disappear from the planet, but the system endured, flawed and adaptable, for seventy years.

In four days, between Quebec and Singapore, Trump showed that the liberal order is hateful to him, and that



he wants out. Its rules are too confining, its web of connections—from trade treaties to security alliances—unfair. And he seems to find his democratic counterparts distasteful, even pathetic. They speak in high-minded rhetoric rather than in Twitter insults, they're emasculated by parliaments and by the press, and maybe they're not very funny. Trump prefers the company of dictators who can flatter and be flattered. Part of his unhappiness in Quebec was due to the absence of President Vladimir Putin; before leaving for the summit, Trump had demanded that Russia be unconditionally restored to the G-7, from which it was suspended over the dismemberment of Ukraine. He finds nothing special about democratic values, and nothing objectionable about murderous rulers. "What, you think our country is so innocent?" he once asked.

Kim Jong Un is Trump's kind of world leader. Instead of condemning Kim's brutal consolidation of power, Trump admires and identifies with it, as if Kim were the underestimated scion of a family real-estate business who's quickly learned the ropes. "When you take over a country—a tough country, with tough people—and you take it over from your father," Trump told Fox News, "if you can do that at twenty-seven years old, I mean, that's one in ten thousand that could do that. So he's a very smart guy."

Trump, with his instinct for exploiting resentments and exploding norms, has sensed that many Americans are ready to abandon global leadership. The disenchantment has been a long time coming. Barack Obama saw that the American century was ending and

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

wanted to reduce U.S. commitments, but he tried to do so within the old web of connections. In pulling back, he provided Trump with a target. Now Trump is turning retrenchment into rout.

What would it mean for the United States to abandon the liberal order? There's no other rules-based order to replace it with, which is why the definite article in the G-7 communiqué was appropriate. The alternative to an interconnected system of security partnerships and trade treaties is a return to the old system of unfettered power politics. In resurrecting the slogan "America First" from prewar isolationists who had no quarrel with Hitler, Trump was giving his view of modern history: everything went wrong when we turned outward.

Power politics favors regimes accustomed to operating outside the liberal order. Asked about Trump's desire to see Russia restored to the G-7's good graces, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was dismissive—"We never asked to be allowed back"—as if Russia were happy not to have to answer to democratic scolds. After Quebec, the German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, placed the United States among the rogue regimes: "Donald Trump's egotistical politics of 'America First,' Russia's attacks on international law and state sovereignty, the expansion of gigantic China: the world order we were used to, it no longer exists." Europe is rapidly pulling away from the United States, but the European Union is weak and divided. The liberal order always depended on American leadership.

Trump imagines that America unbound, shaking hands or giving the finger, depending upon short-term interests and Presidential whims, will flourish among the other rogues. After his meeting with Kim, he flew home aglow with wonder at his own dealmaking prowess, assuring Americans that they could now sleep in peace. In fact, Trump had secured nothing except the same vague commitment to dismantling North Korea's nuclear program which the regime has offered and routinely betrayed in the past. Meanwhile, he gave up something real—joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises, which he called "provocative," the language of totalitarian and aggressive North Korea. Without allies and treaties, without universal values, American foreign policy largely depends on what goes on inside Trump's head. Kim, like Putin, already seems to have got there.

Power politics is not a system that plays to American strengths. For all our lapses, we thrived for seventy years by standing for something. It wasn't boilerplate at all, and we are present at the destruction. When the next global economic crisis or major war or terrorist attack happens, America will be alone.

—*George Packer*

DEPT. OF WHO YOU KNOW

POWER LUNCH



On an evening in the week after the 2016 election, the N.Y.P.D. blocked off Fifty-second Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, and Donald Trump pulled up outside the 21 Club with members of his family. The restaurant is a longtime favorite of Trump's; it has a dress code, and it foregrounds its celebrity associations, like a monument overshadowed by its own gift shop, or a midtown Mar-a-Lago. In 1984, Trump made a half-hearted attempt to buy the restaurant; two years earlier, Roy Cohn, his lawyer, threw Roger Stone a thirtieth-birthday party there. Visiting as President-elect, Trump received a standing ovation. He ate a thirty-six-dollar burger and made a promise to fellow-diners, saying, "We'll get your taxes down. Don't worry about it." (In the same restaurant a few weeks later, Michael Flynn, having accepted a job as Trump's national-security adviser, is reported to have met representatives of the Turkish government who offered him millions of dollars to kidnap or render Fethullah Gülen, the Turkish cleric who lives in Pennsylvania.)

At the start of this year, the 21 Club closed for renovations, said to be needed after flooding caused by a burst pipe. A *Times* reporter, on a tour of the work in late January, noted that crews had "ripped out walls, ceilings and flooring." A few weeks ago, the restaurant announced that its first-floor space was ready to reopen, but, in the days leading up to its first service, someone walking along Fifty-second Street might have noticed, beneath a balcony lined with iron lawn jockeys, a crumpled piece of paper pasted to an outer wall. This, a notice of a stop-work order, had been issued by the Department of Buildings; an inspector had seen exposed floor and ceiling joists on the second floor, as well as exposed electrical wiring and, in one room, the absence of fire-safety protections. The inspector had not been allowed to visit other floors. The restaurant's management, as if hoping to align itself with White House theories of legal immunity, had been renovating without a D.O.B. permit.

Still, at lunchtime on May 8th, the 21 Club greeted its first guests since January. (On the same day, news broke, via the lawyer of the porn star alleged to have had an affair with the President, that a



shell company controlled by Michael Cohen, the President's attorney, had been paid millions of dollars by American companies, including one linked to a Russian oligarch.) "Welcome back," staff members said, again and again. The dining room was half full, and calm. Two women of retirement age hugged their server, saying, "Oh, my God!," in apparent relief at the end of exile. A British family was celebrating a daughter's twenty-first birthday; a waiter told them he was looking for the 66 Club, to celebrate his. Later, he explained to another table that work was continuing in the cellar, and upstairs, where there are private dining rooms, in-

cluding the one where, during the Obama Administration, Rudy Giuliani told his table, "I do not believe that the President loves America." The bathrooms smelled of paint. The stop-work order was still in place, but the notice was no longer posted outside.

One afternoon a few days later, Theodore Suric, the restaurant's general manager, was at a table beside a bay window, wearing a suit and sneakers. Asked about the complications of reopening a restaurant subject to a stop-work order, he said, "January 2nd, we had a big flooding, it's an old building. . . . Once we started peeling down, there were some things to remedy. That's really it. It was really general repair, what we were doing. But it's such a big restaurant—twenty-six thousand square feet, four floors—that it took a little while." (The restaurant is owned by Belmond, a London-based hotel company.)

Asked why the restaurant had not sought a permit, Suric said, "Because one wasn't necessary. It was general repair." This, he said, was why the stop-work order had been rescinded.

According to the D.O.B.'s Web site, the order had been only part-rescinded, to allow for remedial fire-safety work; it was otherwise in place.

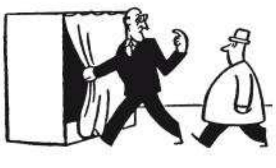
Suric disagreed. When pressed, he said, "I'm not sure, to be honest with you, I don't know." (A D.O.B. spokesman later confirmed that the stop-work order still applied; he also explained that it's illegal to remove a posted order.)

Suric said that it was disappointing not to be given a chance to talk about the restaurant's history, and left the table.

Frank Sinatra was singing, "Come fly with me." At the bar, a man in a tweed jacket sat motionless, staring straight ahead.

—*Ian Parker*

FESTIVAL POSTCARD
REGISTRATION DAY



In the shadow of the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge, a stream of people snaked toward Randall's Island Park, heading to the Governors Ball music festival. The attendees—mostly white, mostly middle class, mostly in their teens and early twenties—were in their summer best. The guys wore tennis shoes, shorts, and T-shirts. The girls' getups were more elaborate: sneakers (Vans or Adidas), denim short shorts, a colorful halter or strapless top, and a mini-backpack or fanny pack (typically glittery). Those who dared accessorized with two buns atop their heads—the kind popularized by Björk in the nineties, a seeming lifetime ago.

On the festival grounds, a stone's throw from the LaCroix Fizz Lounge, City Winery's Rosé Hideaway, and the Kleenex Cabana, Aaron Ghitelman stood near the booth of the voter-registration organization HeadCount, working to capture the attention of passing festivalgoers. Ghitelman, the group's director of communications, is a cheerful twenty-six-year-old with a red beard and the robustly timbred voice of your favorite camp counsellor. He peppers his speech with relevant abbreviations: "reg," meaning registration; "last four," meaning the final digits of a Social Security number.

"My grandmother votes in every election," he said. "She'll find her way to the D.M.V. even if it means taking three buses. But most people here"—he gestured at the fresh-faced revellers around him—"would not take three buses to register to vote. So we're here to make it easy for them." HeadCount, which defines itself as "a non-partisan organization that uses the power of music to register voters," often stakes out concerts. The goal for the three-day festival was registering three hundred people.

Haley Stewart, a platinum-bobbed student at James Madison University, in Virginia, in a yellow crop top printed with the words "Written and Directed by Quentin Tarantino," approached the booth. She was excited to register. "Last time, I didn't vote, 'cause I'm the worst!" she said. "I kinda felt like I didn't need to, but that's a really bad thing, I've learned—to be, like, 'Everyone else's got it.'" She laughed. "This is so important! I'm a political-science major!"

Her boyfriend, Stephen, seemed less certain. "I normally don't really pay attention to politics," he said.

"It takes ninety seconds!" Ghitelman said. "Give me one good reason why you're not going to register to vote. I'll take it and let you go." An awkward silence followed. "Do you have a reason?" Ghitelman pressed.

"He has no reason," Stewart said.

"Might as well," Stephen finally said, reaching for a pen. Two down!

"I don't blame any young person who says, 'I don't think it makes a difference,'" Ghitelman said. "When you're nineteen and you hear politicians talking about issues that are so far away, like Social Security, that's not tangible. If politicians were up there talking about A.I. or about Juul, it would be completely impenetrable to our parents' generation."

Victoria Bieniasz, a college student from Brooklyn, wearing a silver Tiffany heart-tag necklace and an Apple Watch, wasn't sure if she wanted to register. "I did get the papers in the mail, and I just sort of ripped them up," she admitted. "I'm very, like, mellow with everything. I'm not saying I don't care—I'm just saying I don't care *enough*."

"It literally takes ninety seconds," Ghitelman began again. "You're not obligated to vote. I think it's *cool* if you vote, but, like, you're not committing yourself to anything. You're just opening the door to allow yourself to vote."

Bieniasz's friend Julia Sudol was registering. She had been too young to vote in the last election. "I wouldn't have voted for Trump," she said. "But I do think I'm moderately Republican."

Bieniasz decided to register, too, but was unsure how to fill out her party affiliation. "In New York, I'd highly advise selecting a party, because you can't vote in primaries unless you're affiliated with a party," Ghitelman explained. "Did anyone running for President in 2016 excite you at all?"

"She'd probably be a Bernie Sanders girl," Sudol suggested.

"Me?" Bieniasz asked.

"If you had a chance to vote for him in 2016, would you have?" Ghitelman asked.

"The old guy? Yeah," Bieniasz said. She laughed.

Near sunset, Ever Lasley and Grace Surgent approached the booth. They had just graduated from high school in Greenwich, Connecticut. A problem arose, however, when Surgent

couldn't remember her "last four."

"No one at eighteen knows their Social Security digits," she said.

"Can you call your mom, and she'll be hyped that you're doing this?" Ghitelman asked.

Surgent called. "Hey, Mom, can you tell me my Social Security number?" she asked, over the grinding guitars from the festival's main stage.

"She can just read out the last four," Ghitelman instructed.

"*Mom*. Can you text me the last four digits of my Social Security number?" Surgent repeated, more loudly.

"Because you're trying to register to vote," Ghitelman prompted.

"Oh—because I'm trying to register to vote," Surgent said. "Pardon? What is it? Perfect. Thanks, Mom."

A boy entered the booth, looking for Lasley and Surgent.

"Are you registered to vote?" Ghitelman asked.

"Yes," the boy said.

"Fuck yeah!" Ghitelman said. The two high-fived.

—*Naomi Fry*

THE PICTURES
GARDEN COP



The actress Ann Dowd descended from her apartment, in Chelsea, carrying a Buddha and a potted fern. Dowd, who has lived in the same housing development since 1989, keeps a plot in the community garden: a mulchy oasis amid brick behemoths. On her way out of the elevator, a woman eyed her and said, "Are you throwing that out?"

"No, I'm bringing it to the garden," Dowd told her brightly. A moment later, she grumbled, "There's a lot of rules in the garden. You have to plant by a certain time or you'll lose your plot, and she's one of those sort of police." Garden cop: it sounded like a role for Dowd, who tends to get cast as battle-axes. On the HBO drama "The Leftovers," she was a domineering cult leader. On "The Handmaid's Tale," now in its second season on Hulu, she plays Aunt Lydia, a cattle-prod-wielding enforcer in a too-close-for-comfort misogynist dystopia, a role that not only won Dowd an Emmy but became a cultural reference point. (Michelle Wolf to Sarah Huckabee Sanders, at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner: "I love you as Aunt Lydia in 'The Handmaid's Tale.'" Then: "Mike Pence, if you haven't seen it, you would love it.")

"Lydia wants to hang around for a really long time and get the job done," Dowd said. She wore a purple pashmina and fake eyelashes, remnants of a morning talk-show appearance. For Lydia, she said, she drew on her Irish Catholic upbringing, in Massachusetts. "I hesitate to say this, because nuns get a bad rap. But I was educated by Catholic nuns, and they don't kid around. A number of times I would be called out of basketball practice by Mother Claude. She'd say, 'What was your job this week? Sweeping? What's that over there?' I'd say, 'Oh, I missed that.' And she'd go, 'You are not special. You are not different. You have a job.'"

Like most character actors, Dowd, who is sixty-two, broke out late in her career. She studied premed at the College of the Holy Cross, but changed life plans when her organic-chemistry teacher told her, "You're doing well and you're not happy. What's going on?" As a theatre actress in Chicago and then New York, she supported herself waiting tables, working at Petland (she was terrified of the lizards), decluttering for hoarders (she called her short-lived business Escape from Alcatrash), doing a Pizza Hut commercial (she was chided for asking, "Do I have to eat this?"), and, for a total of forty-two minutes, telemarketing for a frozen-food company.



Ann Dowd

One day in 1986, she was walking to a waitressing job and saw a limousine parked outside a film première. It was for "About Last Night . . . ," starring her drama-school classmate Elizabeth Perkins. Dowd went home and wept, until a voice inside told her, "It's all going to be fine. It will happen in your fifties. You will be fifty-six." When she was fifty-six, she won a National Board of Review award for the 2012 film "Compliance." She's played five different people on "Law & Order": a computer technician, a baby snatcher, a homicidal oncologist, the mother of a psychopath, and a woman who murders a rapist. This month, she has supporting roles in a quartet of indie films, playing a librarian ("American Animals"), Claire Danes's mother ("A Kid Like Jake"), Andrea Riseborough's mother ("Nancy"), and a Devil worshipper ("Hereditary"). "I often wonder what it would be like to play a straightforward, intelligent surgeon," she said.

She crossed the street to the garden, where she was pleased to see her rosebush in bloom. "See, they already dropped off the bags of manure," she noted, and raked the soil. She got the plot fifteen years ago, as a sanctuary for her son, who is on the autism spectrum. "I have pictures—they slightly break my heart, but they're all so beautiful—of him just sitting in a chair and looking out, peaceful." One time, he hid a letter from the mail pile asking for payment of dues, and the garden cops revoked her privileges. "They said, 'Sorry, those are the rules.' I literally begged: 'You don't understand—this is for my son!' So I'm careful now."

She dug a hole for the fern. "Here's a peanut. The squirrels buried it," she said, tossing away a shell. An earthworm poked up its head, then retreated—a Hulu subscriber, no doubt. She had found the Buddha statue in North Carolina, on location for the TNT series "Good Behavior." (Against type, she plays a fun-loving F.B.I. agent.) She placed it under the rosebush. "I'm not Buddhist, but I love to have them in the garden," she said. "Someone took my last one. Who wants *that* karma?"

—*Michael Schulman*

REUNION
O.G.S



Last Thursday, four members of the horn-driven seventies-and-eighties hitmakers Kool & the Gang were inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, at a ceremony in Manhattan, honoring an œuvre that includes "Ladies' Night," "Get Down on It," "Jungle Boogie," and the ecstatic wedding-and-bar-mitzvah anthem "Celebration." Last Tuesday, three of those inductees, the founding members Ronald (Khalis) Bell, his brother Robert (Kool) Bell, and their childhood friend George Brown, met up at the venerable Greenwich Village club Café Wha? and greeted one another with boisterous hugs. "So where are the Jazz Birds?" Brown said. Brown, the drummer, wore a Bob Marley T-shirt. Kool, the bassist, wore a patterned shirt in shades of flamingo. Khalis wore black. They all wore chain necklaces. As Jersey City teens calling themselves the Jazz Birds, the three had started playing gigs at Café Wha? in the mid-sixties, when it was frequented by Richard Pryor, Richie Havens, and a ten-year-old David Lee Roth, whose uncle owned the place. (Later, they reunited with Roth, when Kool & the Gang toured with Van Halen.)

They sat in a banquette. "Kool was in a gang for real," Khalis said. Music helped refocus his energies. Kool pointed to the stage and said that he'd first picked up a bass in "that seat over there." The Bells grew up with music; their father was a boxer who hung out with Thelonious Monk—Kool's godfather—and Miles Davis. ("Miles wanted to get in the ring with my father," Khalis said. "He said, 'Miles, you're gonna mess up your lip.'") The Jazz Birds triumphed at Amateur Night at the Apollo; in high school, they played local clubs. "The teachers would be there, drinking—'You do your homework?'" Brown said. Later, they backed other Jersey bands, playing in several soul and funk styles. Jazz was the foundation of Kool & the Gang's first few albums, but their range made it easy to diversify. In 1978, they hired James (JT) Taylor—the fourth Hall of Fame inductee, who left the band in 1988—to sing lead vocals, and produced a string of Top Forty hits, starting with the disco-flavored "Ladies' Night."

"We used to go to Studio 54 and Regine's, and every Friday night was ladies' night," Kool said. "So it was apropos." Brown came up with the song's bass groove, inspired by poverty. "I was walking from Fifty-seventh Street to Gramercy Park, 'cause no money—they called me Bobby Fundsarelow," he said. "I saw people walking, and I said, 'Ooh, looks like a walking bass line.' Might as well make lemons into lemonade." The three of them sang it at the table. "Khalis came in with 'Oh yes, it's ladies' night,'" Brown said. "JT did 'On disco lights.'"

Everybody added something. "A lot of the songs, I may have spearheaded 'em," Khalis said. "But it's really, with a 'K,' the kollective genius of a band called Kool & the Gang."

In a phone call, Taylor talked about "Get Down on It." "Khalis was playing this syncopated rhythm on the keyboard," he said. "I said, 'Keep playing that!' I started singing this melody: 'I heard all the children say.' We flipped that to 'Get down on it' and 'I heard all the people say.'" He also came up with the song's delightful sha-ba-doo-ba-do-ba-doo: "That's just a swing riff."

"Here's what I'll call the concept of inspiration of 'Celebration,'" Khalis said, at Café Wha?. "I was reading the Scripture, where angels were celebrating the Creator for creating man." The part in which Taylor repeatedly cries "Yahoo!" has a more secular origin: Earl Toon, Jr., a former band member, "used to wear a cowboy hat," Brown said, and they came up with it on the tour bus.

On the phone, Taylor said, "How many black men have you ever heard scream, 'Yahoo!'?" He laughed. "Brothers don't usually say that. But from my perspective, it was just a fun time to do a fun song. We put fun in it." When he first played "Celebration" for his mother, she told him, "You're going to sing that song for the rest of your life."

"Celebration" went to No. 1 in 1980. Soon after, it was played at the World Series, the Super Bowl, and a ticker-tape parade for the returning Iran hostages on the day of Ronald Reagan's Inauguration. "Hey, Ronnie!" Brown said. "We're not Republicans, but, ah—"

"Also, they played it on the moon," Khalis said. "I mean, not on the moon but on the space shuttle." "Celebration," which the band performed in East Berlin, may also have helped reunify Germany. "They said we put a crack in the wall, because the wall came down right after that," Kool said.

Another wall came down on Thursday, at the Marriott Marquis. After performances by everyone from Ariana Grande to John Mellencamp, the crowd danced as Taylor and the gang played "Celebration." "It's time to come together," Taylor sang. "Yahoo!"

—*Sarah Larson*



"You're probably looking for the other chief executive."

PROFILES

FIGURE OF SPEECH

How Stephen A. Smith shapes the discourse of the sports world.

BY VINSON CUNNINGHAM



"I'm watching '60 Minutes' last night, with the whole Stormy Daniels thing, and the President and all that," Stephen A. Smith said, early on a Monday near the end of March. He was sitting behind the desk in his small, sparsely furnished office at the Bristol, Connecticut, headquarters of ESPN, eating breakfast—oatmeal with brown sugar and milk, and a green smoothie. The live taping of "First Take," the morning-time sports-debate show that he co-hosts and that has made him one of the network's best-paid stars, would begin in a couple of hours. The night before, Daniels, a well-known performer in pornographic films, had sat across from Anderson Cooper and outlined in queasy detail the particulars of her tryst with Donald Trump, and of the hush money she subsequently received from his fixer, Michael Cohen. "And all I'm thinking about," Smith continued, "is, Is he getting impeached? *Really*? Is anybody being arrested? *Really*?! So why are we doing this? That's really my attitude. I'm watching, and they're talking about"—here he affected a mocking, singsong parody of an over-earnest political pundit—" 'Well, the *law*yer paid a hundred and thirty thousand *dol*lars, and basically because of *that* you did it on behalf of the *Pres*ident and it can be perceived as a campaign contri*bu*tion, and you exceeded the *lim*it.' And I'm sitting there, like, 'So, let me get this straight. In this day and age, somebody tried to wield influence, paid off somebody, and he's *already* in office, and you think that you're gonna get him out of there? Good luck with that.' That's how I deduce things."

I got the impression that, under other circumstances, Smith would have happily continued to narrate his underwhelmed response to the blooming national scandal for the rest of breakfast. The hallmark of his presence on TV and radio—where, every weekday, beginning just an hour after "First Take" goes off air, he hosts the two-hour "Stephen A. Smith Show"—is his ability not only to talk but to editorialize, at length, and more or less extemporaneously, about any topic tossed his way, like a juggler whose every bauble is an item of current events. Already that morning, as we walked from a "First Take" production meeting to the ESPN cafeteria, and then to his office, he'd offered his thoughts on the perils of the sedentary life ("Blood clots and all of that stuff. That's how that develops—always sitting, never stand, never walk, never run"); the hierarchy among big-screen leading men ("I happen to love Will Smith. I happen to love Ed Norton. I happen to love my brother Jamie Foxx, who I think is the most talented and versatile talent in all of Hollywood. I love these guys, but there's only one Denzel"); and the relative benefits of various milks ("I used to think the almond milk was best, but then somebody told me—a trainer told me—there's too much estrogen up in there. In the almond milk. That's right." It's not right. "You don't wanna walk around with man-boobs if you don't have to. I got away from that"). Given time, he might have explicated the angles of the Stormy Daniels affair the way that he and his daily "First Take" debate partner, Max Kellerman, size up an N.F.L. coach's press conference or the latest playoff performance by LeBron James.

But he had alighted on the tawdry intrigue of the moment only to illustrate a larger point, about how audiences these days approach news media, whether it concerns sports or politics or, as seems to be the case more and more often, both at once. "You watch to just hear perspectives," he said. "Back in the day, you watched to learn the news. Now you can

Smith has a gift for editorializing, at length, about any topic tossed his way.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC HELGAS

get the news in five minutes. Between your smartphones and everything else—you've always got the news. So you're interested in watching different perspectives, hearing what people have to say, what their opinions are, and why. And sort of gauging whether or not they're right or wrong. People think they *know*. They're not interested in learning. They're interested in hearing whether or not your perspective is aligned with theirs. If so, why, and if not, why not? That used to be just sports. Now it's everywhere.

"The job," he said, looking thrilled to have it, "is to be enough of a personality that they want to know what *you* think."

Smith, who turned fifty last year, is tall and lanky, with negligible shoulders; in person, the great majority of his body seems supplementary, like the long stem of a small-bowled glass that delicately holds his head. The upper part of his back stoops slightly, pushing his face forward into the space between himself and the camera, an instrument that has never daunted him, he says, not even the very first time he appeared on air. He saw the red light and popped into action, like Jordan after the whistle. His eyes are deep-set and uncommonly circular; when he stretches them into surprise—often in accompaniment of a spiked tetrasyllable like "ri-*di*-cu-lous," or "pre-*pos*-ter-ous," or "Max *Kel*-ler-man"—they are perfect O's. His hairline sits ever farther back from his squirming eyebrows, and his shifting expanse of forehead signals emotions before they make their way out of his mouth. It clenches into a furious rictus, or gathers itself into three befuddled folds as his brows jolt upward, or, at moments of deepest disgust, smooths out entirely, into a kind of placid pre-irritation, like a calm body of water, at the bottom of which there is a mine, ready to detonate.

All of this is secondary, though, to Smith's voice, and its four distinct registers. There's the even second tenor, which he uses to convey information, or to drily recapitulate somebody else's point before chopping it down. Slightly higher, pitchwise, is the lilting whine that he deploys for derision. Above these is a falsetto, which punctuates his many raptures of disbelief: "*Really*?!" "*WHAT*?!?!" "*No!!!!!*" Finally, there is the scream. Early in his TV career, Smith got the nickname Screamin' A. (His middle name is Anthony.) When the other voices are not enough, Smith pulls a hoarse yell from somewhere near his sternum and lathers out his judgment. But, over the years, he has discovered that this register must be held in check. "I had to learn how to pull back sometimes," he told me.

After breakfast, I followed Smith across campus to the studio where "First Take" is recorded. ESPN has been headquartered in Bristol since its early days, in the late seventies, because its two founders lived in Connecticut and real estate was cheap there. Its first broadcast aired on September 7, 1979: an episode of its flagship news program, "SportsCenter." With funding from Getty Oil, the fledgling network purchased the rights to various college sporting events, then the N.F.L. draft. In 1984, ABC bought Getty's stake in ESPN, and sold twenty per cent of the company to Nabisco, which sold its shares to the Hearst Corporation; in 1996, ABC's stake became the property of the Walt Disney Company. As ESPN has grown from a basic-cable novelty to a corporate-media behemoth, its campus has likewise expanded, if not quite kept pace—these days, it looks like a dismal liberal-arts college, sans quad. The buildings that house the network's studios, cafeterias, and offices are squat, with red brick façades interrupted by large windows. Shuttle vans carry visitors and employees from one spot to the next.

When we reached the studio, Smith took a final sip of his smoothie, received a light dusting of makeup, and took a seat at a bean-shaped desk, across from the "First Take" moderator, Molly Qerim. (Kellerman was taping from Los Angeles.) Qerim bantered with the crew as they cranked levers and established their shots. Smith maintained an almost perfect stillness, preserving energy for his precious moments on the air. The Philadelphia Eagles defensive end Michael Bennett had recently been indicted, in Houston, for allegedly injuring an elderly paraplegic woman in the moments after his brother's team, the New England Patriots, won the Super Bowl, in 2017. (Bennett was accused of pushing the woman as he made his way onto the field. His lawyer has said he "just flat-out didn't do it.") Smith explained, once the cameras were rolling, that he was horrified by the accusation, and, especially, by the sensational and possibly racialized way that Houston's police chief had described Bennett's actions. Then, just as he reached the height of a defense of Bennett's character, he stopped.

"Put this camera on me, please," he said, annoyance swimming across his face. He made a turning motion with his fingers, as if attempting to swivel the lens himself. "Because it is *very* important that I say this!"

"First Take" began life in 2003, under the name "Cold Pizza," ESPN's attempt at a sports-world version of "Good Morning America." The name was changed in 2007; a few years later, the network's ratings analysis revealed that viewership spiked during the show's intermittent debate segments, featuring the columnists Skip Bayless and Woody Paige. So, in 2011, the show's other features were dropped, and it became two hours of debate. Smith began making guest appearances that year. In 2012, he joined Bayless on the show full time.

The format is simple: a moderator, customarily female, lobs a question to the two stars of the show (always male, so far, save for days when somebody is sick or on vacation). The men all but invariably offer opposing opinions, then duke it out, absent any real hope of persuasion, for two or three minutes, until the next commercial break. New segment, new topic. Repeat as needed until two hours are spent. It's a feat of transformation: the solid but unprocessed stuff of sports—movement and minute coördination, thousands of barely conscious acts of choice—becomes pure discourse. In this way, the show dramatizes one of the mercies of following sports. Almost nightly, we gain access to a fresh set of low-stakes facts over which to tussle, in replacement, if not outright avoidance, of weightier matters. On "First Take," as in barbershops across Harlem and bars all over Chicago, games elicit emotional responses incommensurate with their importance. Eyes bulge. Hands flail. Whole modes of comportment and personal ethics come under question.

Bayless is an Oklahoma native who spent most of his pre-television career in Texas. He and Smith first met, in 1999, at an N.B.A. game; a few years later, they filmed a pilot for Fox Sports Net titled

"Sports in Black and White," which never aired. On "First Take," they often invoked individual athletes as metonyms for the broader values and varieties of excellence that animated their enjoyment of sports. Two athletes came up with special frequency: the N.B.A. superstar LeBron James, who, like Smith, is black, and the former Florida Gators quarterback Tim Tebow, who, like Bayless, is white. For Bayless, Tebow represented all-American wholesomeness and stoutness of heart, and also clutch performance. For Smith, Tebow was a dud—a nice and commendably pious dud, but a dud all the same—who could barely throw a spiral and would never make a lasting N.F.L. starter. (Smith was right about this.) Conversely, for Smith, James was nearly unimpeachable, "the league M.V.P." Bayless anathematized James as a diva who was tough when trouncing inferior competition but "soft" when the lights were brightest. (Bayless was wrong about this.)

The contours of these disagreements contributed to an impression that "First Take" was designed, at least in part, to exploit the often unspoken racial fissures that help create some of sports' most stubborn archetypes: the "blue collar" white player who makes up in grit what he lacks in physical ability, and the flashy wide receiver or small forward who cares more about his highlights than about the fortunes of his team. (Women's sports, save when Serena Williams is competing in a major tournament, are rarely fodder for this kind of TV.) The show subtly situates sports debate as a black-American cultural form: rappers are among the most frequent guests, and an original track by Wale has been its theme song since shortly after Smith became one of its stars. Smith and Bayless had obvious affection for one another, and their politics did not map perfectly onto a standard spectrum of left and right. (Smith says that he is an independent; Bayless describes himself as "apolitical.") But they nonetheless served as stand-ins for a national divide.

In 2016, Bayless left ESPN, and signed a contract with Fox Sports 1, which will pay him between twenty-five and thirty million dollars over four years. Fox built a new debate show around Bayless, pairing him with another black co-host, the former wide receiver Shannon Sharpe. ESPN replaced him, on "First Take," with Kellerman. Smith told me that he and Bayless "woke up every morning with totally opposite ideas," whereas he and Kellerman, who are closer in age and both grew up in the New York area, have to find different grooves along which to conduct their debates. Kellerman, for his part, casts his difference with Smith in terms of Isaiah Berlin's famous dichotomy between foxes—nimble empirical machines who address each problem as it comes—and hedgehogs, who strain their understanding of the world through grand interpretive frameworks. "Stephen A. is very much a hedgehog," Kellerman said. (Smith has teasingly called Kellerman "Max Webster," as in the dictionary.) "I think he has a more religious outlook than I do," he continued. "If you believe in an undisprovable hypothesis, because that's how you feel, there's nothing I can say or do to change your mind. So he just expresses his point of view—and he truly does not care what you think. I also say what's on my mind, but the difference is, I *am* trying to convince you of what I think." He added, referencing Bayless, "It's no longer a show between two religious points of view. Now it's a contest between a religious and a secular point of view."

The result is a strange reversal of the show's previous iteration. Kellerman is more likely than Smith to wholeheartedly defend the former N.F.L. quarterback Colin Kaepernick's protest against police brutality, for instance—and Smith has become quicker to criticize LeBron James. After James and his Cleveland Cavaliers were swept by the Golden State Warriors in the N.B.A. finals, James revealed that he had been playing with an injured hand; Smith, in a "First Take" segment, said, "The word that comes to my mind is insecure," adding that James has an "arguably addictive appetite to try and control the narrative." But Smith maintains that his attitude toward James only seems different because he's no longer arguing with Bayless. "Now that Bayless is gone, all I hear is everyone raving about LeBron," he said. "I'm surprised everyone hasn't brought him flowers." He added, "I've stepped up my criticism because I never thought I was being critical—I was being factual."

Viewers sometimes wonder whether Smith sincerely holds the opinions he spouts on air. He does, but he also knows the value of conflict for the purposes of television. "When the Presidential debates are on, I'll watch that like it's the Super Bowl," he told me. "I actually thoroughly enjoy that. I always have. It wasn't just when Trump was debating sixteen Republican candidates. It was also when Al Gore was going up against Bush, or when Kerry was going up against Bush—and *annihilated* Bush in one of those debates—or Clinton going up against H.W. You know, Reagan and Mondale . . . I mean, it's crazy! I've watched Presidential debates since I was a teen, and I love it."

Another television favorite of Smith's since childhood is the long-running soap opera "General Hospital." Since 2016, he has had a recurring role on the show: Brick, a surveillance expert who works for the show's leading man, Sonny Corinthos. (He had a cameo on the show, in 2007, as a TV reporter, which lasted, he said, "ten seconds.") The gig is an exercise in pure wish fulfillment—when Smith talks about it, he almost giggles. The ever-churning arcs of soap operas also provide Smith yet another analogy for his job. Once, he told me, Shaquille O'Neal confronted him about a particularly tough bit of criticism. "I saw that shit you wrote," the big man said. "But damn, here I am about to win a championship." Smith's rejoinder was simple. "Shaq, I'm a 'General Hospital' fan," he said. "Did you know that? And guess what—Sonny Corinthos is gonna live. Did you know that? Victor Newman"—a character from "The Young and the Restless"—"just fell down a flight of stairs and he's in a coma. Did you know he's gonna live? Did you know that? The point is: the story still has to be told."

Smith attributes his love of "General Hospital" to the time he spent watching it with his four older sisters, in Hollis, Queens, where he grew up. Smith's parents were both originally from St. Thomas. His father, who had been a baseball star back home, managed a hardware store; his mother was a nurse. Although his father still lives in Smith's childhood home, along with one of Smith's sisters, Smith does not publicly discuss their relationship. "I don't talk much about him because my father and I are not close," he told me. "And I don't

go into detail about it out of respect for my mother. I'll leave it at that." Smith's mother, who died last June, was a kind of loving drill sergeant, whose simple hope for her son was that he not "be a knucklehead." When Smith expressed indifference toward attending college, she enrolled him in the Thomas A. Edison vocational high school, in order to learn electrical installation. The prospect scared him toward college: he knew that that wasn't what he wanted.

The other spur toward college was basketball. Smith spent much of his youth at the playground near his home, shooting hoops. It had no working lights, so Smith, during evenings after school, would put up shot after shot in the dark. His mother worried about "street dudes"—drug dealers, gang members—but eventually recognized that they looked out for her son. "I was not to be touched," Smith said. "They knew I had a future."

Smith briefly attended the Fashion Institute of Technology, in New York, and then earned a basketball scholarship to Winston-Salem State University, where he began to write sports columns for the student paper. He also hosted a late-night R. & B. radio show called "Tender Moments." He likes to tell the story of writing a column insisting that his own coach, Clarence Gaines, needed to retire. Smith always notes that he told Gaines about the piece ahead of time, and that Gaines, who died in 2005, had no problem with it. But the chancellor, Smith says, thought he should be expelled. (The chancellor, Cleon Thompson, said that he does not recall the incident.)

The best way to learn about the rest of Smith's pre-ESPN career is to make him angry. Last year, after a round of ESPN layoffs, the writer Jeff Pearlman, previously of *Sports Illustrated*, and the author of several books, complained, in a blog post, that the company had let go several respected reporters but held on to Smith. Pearlman contended that Smith, having discovered that reporting didn't pay, "surrendered his integrity card and went full-blown Ringling Bros." The comment continues to rankle Smith, who views his career as an exercise in perfectly incremental meritocracy. "You defined for us what success is," Smith said, when I brought up the matter. (By "you," I took him to mean white people, though Smith said, later, that he was referring to "the system.") "And I walked through it. Sometimes I *crawled* through it. But I made it through."

As Smith reflected on Pearlman's critique, he worked himself into a state of excitement not unlike the ones he performs on camera. "Who the hell are you to say something like that? Were you a beat writer?" Pearlman was a food and fashion writer for the *Tennessean* before going to *Sports Illustrated*, where he covered baseball for seven years. "I've got nothing but respect—you're a best-selling author, I get that—but you weren't on the beat. You didn't break stories like I broke stories. You didn't grind and pound this pavement." He went on, "You want to put résumés up against one another, name the time and place, and *I. Will. Show. Up.*

"Winston-Salem *Chronicle*. Winston-Salem *Journal*. Atlanta *Journal-Constitution*. Back to the Winston-Salem *Journal*. New York *Daily News*—I started out covering homicide. Covered homicide for four months, because the sports department at the *Daily News* had gone away because of the strike. After doing that for four months, I was a high-school-sports writer. I wrote one of the biggest stories in the history of high-school sports, when Karlton Hines got smoked—got killed—somebody shot him, in broad daylight, two in the afternoon, and his mom couldn't accept the fact that her son was dealing drugs. I got into her home, I interviewed her, I interviewed her family, she gave me pictures of him in the casket. *I* did these things!"

Smith next went to the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, where he covered high-school sports, then college sports, and then the pros—and, finally, became a general sports columnist, a position that not many African-American writers have attained. "The N.B.A. lockout in 1998, 1999, I'm breaking stories all over the place, so much so that everybody on TV was calling for me to come on, because nobody in television had the info. And that got me onto CNN/SI, which brought me on as an N.B.A. analyst on television. Then transitioned to Fox Sports, which ultimately led to ESPN."

The *Inquirer*, Smith said, wanted him to keep writing as his profile grew. And so he wrote columns "while hosting my own radio show, while hosting a national television show. Who does that? And *I* am the guy that you wanna talk about? That's insulting. It's a sticking point for me. Yes, I'm a personality. I accept that. O.K.? I understand it. But I'm a personality with credentials."

The moment, in 2005, when Smith became a triple threat—columnist, radio host, TV host—was a kind of apotheosis. Profiles in *Sports Illustrated* and the *Times* followed. ("People might come back because they hate him," an ESPN executive said to *S.I.*, of Smith's ratings. "The bottom line is, they come back.") But it proved difficult to sustain. In 2007, the *Inquirer* bumped him down to general-assignment reporter. The paper fired him the following year. An arbitrator later



"I used to think you were kinky, but I'm beginning to wonder if you just aren't attracted to me."

ruled that the firing was "unjust," and Smith was reinstated as a columnist, in 2010. He left the paper for good less than a year later.

Meanwhile, ESPN declined to renew his contract. "There were people who had gotten quite uncomfortable with the level, and the intensity, of his brand, so to speak," James Andrew Miller, who cowrote, with Tom Shales, the oral history "Those Guys Have All the Fun: Inside the World of ESPN," told me. "It was very bombastic and outspoken." According to Miller, Smith's style irritated traditionalists within the company, who favored the relatively buttoned-up presentation of "SportsCenter." Smith did a brief stint with Fox, before a separate ESPN faction mounted a successful campaign to bring him back into the fold. "Stephen is not a cheap date," Miller said. "But if he's on five times a week, and you can deliver eyeballs in the morning, it's a good deal for you."

Smith told me that when he realized, in 2009, that his contract wouldn't be renewed, he moped at home for about thirty-six hours. Then he talked to his mother. "But what did *you* do?" she asked him. The question, he says, jolted him out of his funk, and got him thinking about his attitude. He'd taken slights personally, sometimes attributing to racial bias matters better explained by the simple dollar. From now on, wherever he landed, he'd make himself a total asset—so undeniably helpful that reward would have to follow.

That attitude has served him well in the years since his return to the network, which have been increasingly rocky ones for ESPN. Amid a long period of layoffs, fuelled, in part, by cord cutting—younger viewers opting for streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu, delivered via Roku or Apple TV—Smith and "First Take" have thrived. Since Trump's election, ESPN has become the occasional target of conservatives, who accuse it of being in the bag for cultural progressivism, a kind of sporty sibling to MSNBC. Last September, Jemele Hill, who, along with Michael Smith, was hosting the six-o'clock edition of "SportsCenter," irked the current Administration, and its fans, when she described Trump as a "white supremacist" on Twitter. A few months later, she was off the show. "ESPN is saying two things," Miller told me. "First, it's: be distinctive. But then, when Michael and Jemele are really themselves, the message is: not that distinctive."

ESPN operates eight cable networks; until last year, "First Take" aired on its second-most-watched channel, ESPN2. The show now airs on ESPN's primary cable network, which has far more viewers, and its ratings are stronger than ever. And the show has an afterlife online: Smith's "First Take" segments are posted on YouTube when the broadcast is done. As declining cable subscriptions make "SportsCenter" anchors less visible, Smith has become ESPN's most recognizable face—and that has won him more leeway than he was afforded a decade ago. In 2014, when the Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice was suspended by the N.F.L. for domestic abuse, Smith seemed to suggest, on "First Take," that some responsibility for the episode lay with Rice's wife. "Let's make sure we don't do anything to provoke wrong actions," he said. (Although video footage later emerged of Rice punching his wife in the face and head, a judge dismissed a charge of aggravated assault after Rice paid a small fine and completed anger-management counselling.) Several of Smith's colleagues registered their anger about the remarks; some commentators outside the company called for his firing. Smith delivered an on-air apology, and was suspended by the network for a week. (Smith remains adamant that the original comments were taken out of context. "I was raised by five women," he said. "I would never hit a woman, I would never condone domestic violence, period.")

In March, I went to see Smith speak in a brightly lit gymnasium at the College of New Jersey. The seats were filled with students, mostly male, in sweats and shorts and shapeless tees; a tall flight of bleachers was pulled out to accommodate later arrivals. Smith bounded onto the stage to applause, and some jokey shouting of his name. He paced as he spoke, slapping his hands together at irregular intervals, like a coach at halftime. The meat of the talk—which, his manager, Rushion McDonald, told me, forms the basis of a forthcoming book—was about succeeding in one's job. "I go to work every day with two missions," Smith said. "*Two!* No. 1: how can I make my bosses more money? And No. 2: how can I get some of it?"

I thought of these missions on the last night Smith and I met. We were having dinner at a restaurant on a high floor of the Mandarin Oriental hotel, in Manhattan, and we had been speaking about Smith's ambitions. He told me that he could see himself at the helm of a late-night show, or even behind the "SportsCenter" desk. (A few weeks later, he hosted special episodes of "SportsCenter" before each weekday game of the N.B.A. finals—which went well, he thought, though it was disappointing that the series was so short.) He said that he was very proud of "First Take" and the radio show. "But if anybody thinks for one second that that's all I wanna do, they don't know me," he said. "They don't know me at all. They haven't done their homework."

I asked Smith what else, besides the brief departure from ESPN, had helped shape his ideas about the business of himself.

"I need you to brace yourself," he said. "What I'm about to tell you is gonna blow you away. And I promise you, it will be in your article. Book it: what I'm about to tell you right now. And I wasn't going to tell you unless you asked. The defining moment in terms of this epiphany, where it elevated to another level, was courtesy of a man now known as the President of the United States of America, Mr. Donald Trump."

Trump was a guest on "Quite Frankly," which aired from 2005 to 2007. "And, at one point—I don't think this was an on-air segment—he said, 'Stephen, when you go to a bank and you borrow three million dollars, and you can't pay it back, you've got a problem. But when you go to a bank and you borrow three hundred million dollars, and you can't pay it back, *we've* got a problem.'" (A variation of this maxim is often attributed to J. Paul Getty, whose company, coincidentally, provided the early backing for ESPN.) "He said, 'The moral of the story is, The more they invest in you the more they must insure your success. If you come cheap, you're expendable. But, if you're expensive, you're valued. Don't ever forget that.' That's what he told me. I never forgot it. Little did I know he would become the President.

"I'm incredibly disappointed in him behaviorally," he quickly added. "But that's it. I don't get into the politics." ♦



EDISON LABS, 1891

BY SIMON RICH

"Sorry to bother," Jed murmured. "But I think I maybe made another mixup."

Thomas Edison squinted at the boy. He'd known for some time that Jed was unintelligent. But lately he'd begun to suspect that the boy was an actual medical idiot.

"What is it now?" Edison muttered.

"Did you say to mix in five centilitres?"

"No," Edison said. "Five *millilitres*."

A nearby beaker exploded, showering them both with shards of glass.

"Sorry," Jed said.

Edison rubbed his throbbing temples. He'd hired the local boy to help with basic lab work, but even the simplest tasks were beyond his capabilities. The boy's best hope for contributing to science would be to let doctors dissect his head to study the brain of a moron. There was just no other use for him.

Except, perhaps, for one.

•

"What do I do?" Jed asked.

"Just stand here," Edison said. "In this spot."

He roughly positioned the boy in front of his new apparatus, a square contraption made of metal and glass.

"O.K.," he said. "Action!"

"What?" the boy said.

"Do some action," Edison said. "With your body."

"What kind?"

"It doesn't matter," Edison said impatiently. "Here." He handed the boy a pair of oblong wooden clubs. "Swing these around."

Jed took the clubs and flailed them jerkily over his head. It was upsetting to watch, but, of course, it didn't matter what Jed did. The point was for Edison to showcase his lab's glorious new invention: the kinetograph. Thanks to its novel high-speed shutter system, the device could produce a living photograph—what Edison liked to call a "motion picture." The phonograph had brought him fame. The light bulb had brought him riches. But this machine would bring him immortality. This machine, he knew, would change the world forever.

•

Edison titled his film, somewhat sarcastically, "Newark Athlete." He expected that people would like it, but when he showed it in his lab the response surpassed his wildest expectations. The reporters he'd invited stood up and cheered, laughing and hollering like children.

Edison snapped his fingers, and Jed ran over to bring him a cigar.

"Any questions?" Edison asked the crowd.

The reporters began to shout.

"It's him!" one of them cried, pointing at the boy. "The Newark athlete!"

Edison turned to Jed, who was smiling stupidly, surprised by the attention.

"Ah, yes," Edison chuckled. "That's the boy I used to display my invention. Anyway . . . questions?"

A reporter raised his hand. "Is it O.K. if I ask the *boy* a question?"

Edison was baffled, but saw no harm in indulging the odd request.

"I suppose that's fine," he said.

The reporter turned to Jed and blushed. He looked a bit nervous. "Wow," he said. "This is exciting. First of all, I just want to say I love your movie."

Edison choked a little on his cigar. It wasn't Jed's movie—it was his. He watched with mounting annoyance as the reporter continued to ramble.

"I think something we'd all like to know is: what kind of preparation did you have to do for your role?"

The boy shrugged. "Not much," he said. "I sort of just stood in front of the lens."

The reporter nodded. "So you just, like, channelled it. You were, like, 'I'm going to *be* this Newark athlete' and then you *were*."

The boy shrugged. "I guess."

"Wow," the reporter said, shaking his head in awe. "Holy shit."

"O.K.," Edison said curtly. "That was fun. Any questions for me? The *inventor* of the kinetograph?"

"Jed!" a reporter in the back shouted. "Do you have any advice for people starting out who want to be in pictures?"

Jed shrugged. "I don't know."

"Please!" the reporter begged.

Jed scratched his head. "I guess . . . follow your dreams?"

The crowd applauded.

Edison tried to regain the reporters' attention, but it was too late. They had rushed past him and were surrounding the boy, peppering him with questions about his personal life.

"No, I'm not seeing anyone right now," Edison heard Jed say.

"Not seeing anyone, like, *at all*?" a reporter asked. "Or, like, not *seriously dating* anyone?"

Jed shrugged. "I guess, like, not seriously dating."

"So you, like, hook up and stuff."

Jed nodded. "I hook up."

Edison realized with amazement that he had been pushed out of his own laboratory. Reporters wrestled past him, brandishing cameras and blasting flash powder in his face. Edison coughed as his throat filled up with magnesium smoke. And, as he sank to his knees, it occurred to him that his prediction had come true: this time, he'd changed the world forever. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Watch Edison's kinetograph experiment.

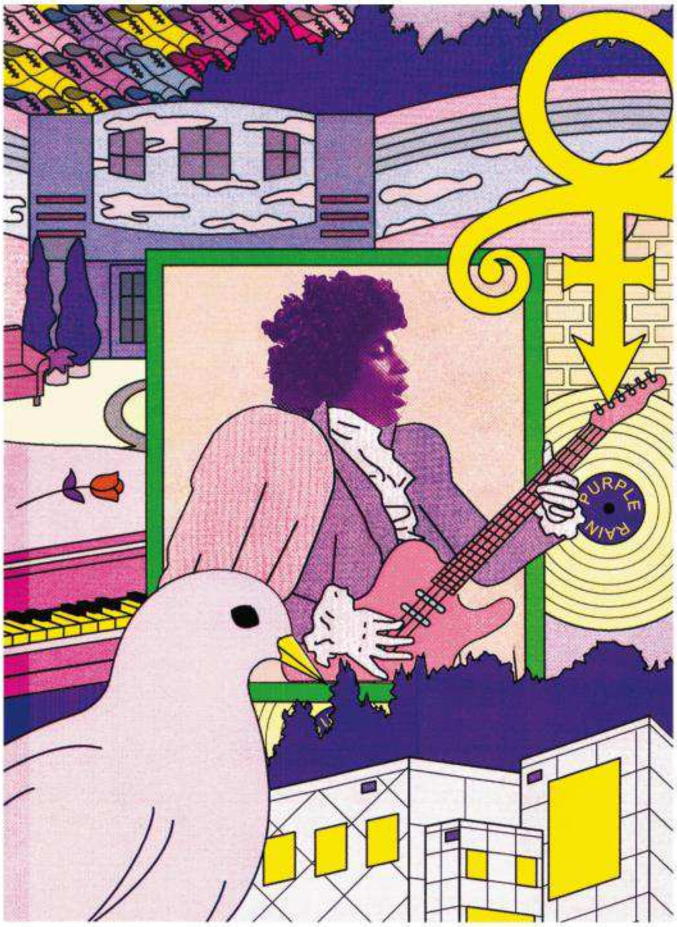
LUCI GUTIÉRREZ

ANNALS OF CELEBRITY

PRINCE'S LONELY PALACE

What you see at Paisley Park.

BY AMANDA PETRUSICH



In 1984, Prince recorded a song called "Paisley Park," for his seventh record, "Around the World in a Day." Its lyrics imagine a kind of utopia:

There is a park that is known
For the face it attracts
Colorful people whose hair
On one side is swept back
The smile on their faces
It speaks of profound inner peace
Ask where they're going
They'll tell you nowhere
They've taken a lifetime lease
On Paisley Park

Prince wrote often and eagerly about the idea of sanctuary—places where his spiritual anxieties were assuaged. Back then, Paisley Park was merely an imagined paradise. "Paisley Park is in your heart," he sings on the chorus.

Three years later, it was real: in 1987, Prince built a sixty-five-thousand-square-foot, ten-million-dollar recording complex in Chanhassen, Minnesota, and called it Paisley Park. It was intended to be a commercial facility—Madonna, R.E.M., and Stevie Wonder all recorded there—but by the end of the nineteen-nineties it had stopped accepting outside clients. Eventually—no one can quite say when—Prince began living there. He wanted to establish a self-contained dominion, insulated from interference or judgment, where he enjoyed total control, and his life could bleed easily into his work.

On April 21, 2016, Prince collapsed and died in an elevator at Paisley Park. He had overdosed on the opioid fentanyl, which he'd been prescribed for chronic hip pain. He was fifty-seven, had sold around a hundred million albums, and did not leave a will. Shortly after hearing the news, Joel Weinshanker, a managing partner of Graceland Holdings (which runs Elvis Presley's Graceland mansion, in Memphis), approached Bremer Trust, the bank tasked by a Minnesota court with administering Prince's estate while his heirs were determined. Weinshanker wanted to make sure that Prince's things were cared for. The bank agreed to let him visit. "The air-conditioning and the heating system weren't working," he told me. "There were leaks in places where you wouldn't want leaks."

Prince's sister, Tyka Nelson, and his five half siblings were eventually named his heirs. With the family's blessing, Graceland Holdings took over management of the property. Because Paisley Park is expensive to maintain, and because the estate was facing a considerable tax bill, the family made one decision quickly: Prince's sanctuary would become a museum. Six months after Prince's death, on October 28, 2016, Paisley Park opened to the public.

From the road, Paisley Park looks industrial, utilitarian, and cheerless, like a big-box store that has recently gone out of business. The exterior is covered in white aluminum panels. Inside, fleecy clouds have been painted on pale-blue walls. Sunlight comes through a glass pyramid over the lobby, but there are very few windows, which makes roaming through the complex disorienting, like spending all day inside a casino. Prince didn't like cameras or cell phones, and visitors are asked to turn these off and place them in pouches at the front desk. (When I left, my pouch was unsealed by a stone-faced security guard whose sole duty appeared to be unsealing pouches.)

On my first visit, I took the V.I.P. tour, which costs a hundred dollars (there is an additional fee for parking), and takes about an hour and forty minutes. Tickets must be purchased online in

The Prince museum aims at intimacy with a star who was profoundly distant.

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL MONTFORT/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

ILLUSTRATION BY GEORGE WYLESOL

advance, and buyers are instructed not to show up more than twenty minutes before the tour begins. The staff is strict about these rules; when I arrived for my 1 P.M. tour a little after twelve-thirty, I was turned away, and nervously circled a Target parking lot. My group included a couple celebrating their thirtieth wedding anniversary who had driven eighteen hours from Richmond, Virginia; two punk musicians from Asheville, North Carolina; and a young man who had travelled alone from Colorado.

The tour begins in the atrium. A pair of caged white doves coo peaceably on an upstairs balcony. (Divinity and Majesty, doves Prince kept as pets, received an "ambient singing" credit on his album "One Nite . . . ," from 2002. Divinity still lives at Paisley Park, though Majesty died in 2017.) Prince's ashes are mounted fifteen feet above the white marble floor, in an urn designed to resemble Paisley Park—it, too, looks like a big-box store, in miniature. The placement feels deliberate, as if guests were required to check in with Prince before proceeding deeper into his home. It's expected that visitors, some of whom are still putting away their car keys, will pause here to enact grave-site rituals—genuflect, sob, pray, bow, or whatever it is a person does to convey homage. My fellow tour-goers clutched one another. Anyone uncomfortable with sudden public displays of bereavement might simply shift anxiously from one foot to the other, uncertain of where to focus her eyes.

Before I arrived, I found the property's purpose somewhat oblique: was it a shrine, a historic site, a mausoleum, a business? In the atrium, I discovered that Paisley Park provides an immediate target for a very particular kind of grief. (The museum's curator, Angie Marchese, described it to me simply as "a place to go.") Most of Prince's fans didn't know him personally, yet his work was essential to their lives. When he died, where could they mourn? An ungenerous reading might be that Americans are so ill equipped to manage death that we are forced to mediate it through tourism. We soothe our pain by buying a plane ticket, booking a hotel room, buying a key chain: expressing gratitude via a series of payments. It works, to an extent.

The Paisley Park tour charges on from the atrium, through exhibit rooms filled with displays—costumes, instruments, notebooks, gold records—that are linked to albums, films, or specific periods in Prince's career. It snakes into his office and his editing bay, and through three studio spaces. These feel clean, modern, and expensive. One of the highlights of the tour is a chance to play Ping-Pong at Prince's own table, where he often beat his guests—including Michael Jackson, who visited Paisley Park in 1986, while Prince was working on the film "Under the Cherry Moon," the follow-up to "Purple Rain." Prince mercilessly taunted the hapless Jackson, who had never played Ping-Pong before. When Jackson dropped his paddle, in defeat or clumsiness, Prince joyfully walloped a ball into his crotch. (The gift shop now sells canary-yellow Ping-Pong balls branded with Prince's purple symbol; I bought a set of two for twelve dollars.) Prince was a more gracious basketball player, though no less formidable. "I don't foul guests," he told the writer Touré when they played a two-on-two game at Paisley Park, in 1998. The incongruousness of the hobby, and his skill at it, was immortalized in a "Chappelle's Show" skit from 2004, in which Prince, who was barely five feet three, drifts gently down from the basket after a winning dunk. The bit reiterated a thought many of us had already had: that the laws of the physical world simply did not apply to Prince.

Prince's office and the so-called little kitchen—a small room just off the atrium, which contains a microwave, a gold-colored French press, a coffee table, and a couch where he watched Minnesota Timberwolves games—are mostly unchanged. It's fun to imagine Prince doing ordinary things here, like unwrapping a microwave pizza, waiting impatiently for it to cook, and then getting molten cheese plastered to the roof of his mouth. (The tour, I should note, does not suggest any such goings on.) At this point, visitors are briefly free to wander alone through the exhibit rooms. Some of my tour-mates saw me taking notes in a small notebook and pulled out their own pads and pens. We were all hungry for information. The screen saver on the desktop computer in the editing bay features a scene of Egyptian pyramids. At the time of my visit, there were framed posters of Fritz Lang's "Metropolis" and Clint Eastwood's "Bird," a film about the life of Charlie Parker, and scented candles had been placed in almost every room. In the office, I noted a stack of books—including a rhyming dictionary, the Bible, several volumes about ancient Egypt, and "In Praise of Black Women."

Many of Prince's elaborate stage costumes are on display here. His outfits were often custom-made, and the craftsmanship and whimsy involved in their construction is staggering. I spent a good ten minutes sizing up a pair of sparkling flared pants, suède-heeled boots, and a generously ruffled shirt, all in the same immodest shade of cherry red—an outfit too bold and spectacular to imagine anyone else wearing. (On Prince, it was majestic.) There are several costumes of historical significance—the long purple coat from the "Purple Rain" movie, that aqua suit he wore for his Super Bowl performance, in 2007—but it's hard to discern what they reveal about Prince, beyond his waist size (in the "Purple Rain" era, a mere twenty-two and a half inches). They're relics of his professional, public life—proof of a groundbreaking career.

Fans tend to shell out staggering amounts of money for memorabilia or other ephemera, because owning such things allows them to feel closer to an artist whose work has deeply moved them (which is to say, it makes real an intimacy that was previously imagined), or because they believe they can learn something private, and heretofore unknown, from it. It's possible to cherish music without worrying about where it came from, or what sort of life its creator led, but true love—and what else powers fandom?—makes us want to know a person in some fundamental and complete way. Stuff becomes a conduit for understanding, and for making more sense of the wild, alchemical rush that fuels both fandom and the art itself. How did Prince come to make so many nonpareil recordings? What allowed for it? What clues now lurk in his silverware drawer, or under his pillow, or in the back of his makeup case?

Prince was born Prince Rogers Nelson, in 1958, in Minneapolis. He was named—in a way—for his father, John Nelson, a pianist who performed as Prince Rogers. His relationship with

his mother, Mattie Shaw, was strained, and his early life was isolated. His parents divorced, in 1966, and he was taken in by a neighbor. From a young age, Prince was confident of his exceptional talent and its worth to the rest of the world. In an interview with his high-school newspaper, in 1976, about a band he had formed, he blamed its lack of fame on geography. "I really feel that if we would have lived in Los Angeles or New York or some other big city, we would have gotten over by now," he said. On his most thrilling songs, such as "Let's Go Crazy," from 1984, or "Sign o' the Times," from 1987, he sounds preternaturally relaxed, as if his musicianship was as innate to him as breathing.

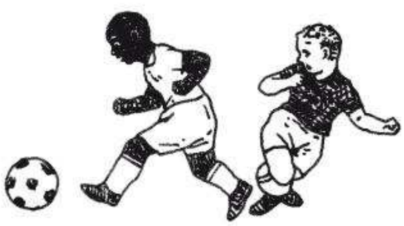
In 1992, Warner Bros. offered Prince a six-record deal worth a hundred million dollars—then the largest recording-and-publishing contract in history. Yet, by 1996, he had begun publicly condemning the music industry. He changed his name to an unpronounceable symbol—Warner Bros. controlled the trademark for the name Prince—and scrawled the word "Slave" on his cheek. His distrust of Warner Bros. has made the contents of his private vault at Paisley Park, which is rumored to contain thousands of unreleased recordings, especially tantalizing. "I didn't always give the record companies the best song," he told *Rolling Stone*, in 2014.

As a pop star, he was unprecedented and occasionally unfathomable. Tiny and hypersexual, he wore heeled boots and black eyeliner, and purposefully eschewed easy categorization. Unlike Michael Jackson, Prince did not appear to be in conflict with himself. Tommy Barbarella, who played keyboards in the New Power Generation, Prince's backing band in the nineteen-nineties, described that self-assurance as essential to Prince's success. "He touched something, especially in those people who were outcasts, or who felt different," Barbarella said. "He made it O.K. to be different."

Details about Prince's personal life remain scant, and there have been surprisingly few posthumous revelations. There is tenderness and lust in his songs, but it's harder to find those things in the stories told about his life. This makes autobiographical readings of his work difficult. In 1996, he married Mayte Garcia, a twenty-two-year-old belly dancer. She had toured with him since she was seventeen, when her parents appointed Prince her legal guardian. Garcia gave birth to a son, Amiir, in October of that year. He died in the hospital at six days old, of a rare genetic condition. Prince refused to publicly acknowledge his son's death. Oprah Winfrey arrived at Paisley Park just a few weeks afterward, and filmed an interview with the couple. She gently asked Prince about Amiir. "It's all good," he replied. "Never mind what you hear."

Garcia's memoir, "The Most Beautiful: My Life with Prince," was published in April of 2017. It's one of the only first-person accounts of life at Paisley Park, and the book's disclosures are sometimes troubling. Under the tutelage of Larry Graham, the bassist for Sly and the Family Stone, Prince became a devout Jehovah's Witness, and because of his new faith, he discouraged Garcia from seeking medical attention after a miscarriage. He was often demanding and proprietary of other people's bodies. If his female backing dancers gained weight, Garcia writes, he docked or withheld their pay.

By many accounts, Prince was an inscrutable and paranoid boss. "An enigma to the end," Barbarella said. "He didn't have close friends." Alan Leeds, who was Prince's tour manager for much of the nineteen-eighties, and briefly ran Paisley Park Records, said



that it was Prince's need for total control that drove him to build Paisley Park. Leeds, who now manages the R. & B. singer D'Angelo, cut ties with Prince in 1992. When D'Angelo visited Paisley Park, in 2000, Prince cautioned him to keep an eye on his tapes when Leeds was around. He worried that Leeds—or someone else—had been leaking stolen recordings. (Leeds denies the accusation.) "When D. came back, he called me from the car," Leeds told me. "He said, 'Man, you won't believe it. He's out of his mind.'"

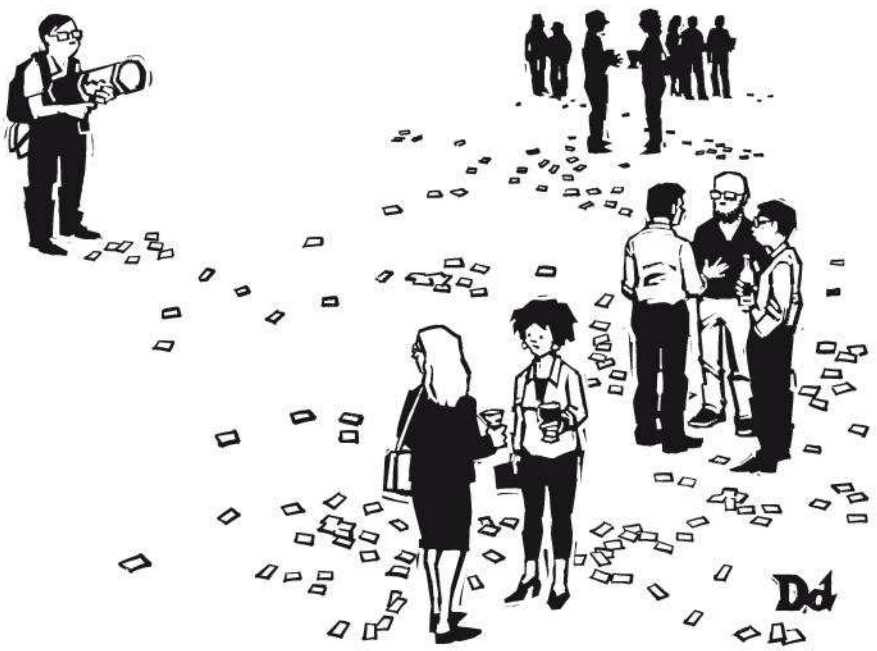
Prince's work ethic was notorious. He often played all or most of the instruments on his albums himself, a tendency that, in an interview with *Rolling Stone*, in 1985, he described as a product of his vigor: "The reason I didn't use musicians a lot of the time had to do with the hours that I worked. I swear to God it's not out of boldness when I say this, but there's not a person around who can stay awake as long as I can," he said. "Music is what keeps me awake."

That he was so fluent at such varied tasks is now part of his legend; we hold it up as further evidence of his brilliance. On "For You," his first album, which he released when he was twenty, Prince is credited with playing twenty-seven different instruments. One track contains forty-seven stacked and layered vocal lines.

Prince's virtuosity was uncontestable, and perhaps nobody else could have played those parts in the same way. But collaboration, even when it's difficult, can sometimes yield a richer, stranger document; work generated and realized in perfect solitude often feels airless. Even though most of his songs are about sex or dancing or some other kind of interpersonal communion, Prince almost never let anyone else into his art. In 2004, when he and George Harrison were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne, Steve Winwood, and others performed the Beatles' "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." Prince appears onscreen about halfway through, as if he'd just been teleported in from some much cooler event. (Rewatching, you can see that he was, in fact, there the whole time, curtly bobbing his head from the far side of the stage.) What he does next, on his solo, is wild and stirring. His shirt is unbuttoned, and there's a rose pinned to his lapel. At first, his eyes stay closed. After a while, his guitar seems to disappear entirely, and it's as if the solo is simply coming from Prince himself—beaming out of his chest. Yet he is never quite of the band. Toward the end, a gleeful and mischievous expression seizes his face. This might be Prince most purely himself—locked into some unreal groove,

alternately ignoring or showing everyone else up. Before he strolls offstage, he launches his guitar toward the heavens. It never comes back down.

At Paisley Park, he was able to write, rehearse, and record as much as he wanted, without compromise, and on his own schedule. "He didn't see music as work," Leeds told me. "It's just what he did. If you called it work, you were a cynic." In "The Most Beautiful," Garcia includes a note that Prince sent her early in the couple's relationship: "A secret—when I have a disagreement with someone—it's usually only one. Then they're gone."



"I don't think the guy with the business-card cannon has ever been to an actual networking event."

Visitors do not have access to the living quarters at Paisley Park. The tour deals with this largely by misdirection, pointing guests toward details that might seem revealing—like the elegant slope of Prince's handwriting—but nonetheless require additional extrapolation to feel meaningful. That interpretive work is generally left to the individual. When the guide pointed out a little circle of spilled wax on the carpet—Prince himself had spilled that wax!—I gazed at it longingly, hoping that something significant might be revealed.

Mostly, the tour made me feel lonesome. Absent its owner, Paisley Park is a husk. In 2004, when Prince briefly rented a mansion in Los Angeles from the basketball player Carlos Boozer, he redesigned the place, putting his logo on the front gate, painting pillars purple, installing all-black carpet, and adding a night club. (Boozer threatened to sue, but Prince restored the house before he moved out.) Yet Paisley Park feels anonymous. His studios are beautiful, but unremarkable. There are many photos of him, and his symbol is omnipresent, but I was hoping for evidence of his outsized quirks and affectations—clues to some bigger truth. I found little that seemed especially personal. Paisley Park presents Prince only as a visionary—not as a father, a husband, a friend, or a son.

It seems likely that Prince himself insured this. ("There's not much I want them to know about me, other than the music," Prince told *Details* in 1991, when asked about his fans.) Although he left no will, he'd carefully prepared his home for visitors prior to his death. Art work or exhibits that seem as if they were surely erected posthumously—a painting of Prince's eyes that overlooks the building's entryway, a mural that depicts both his personal influences (Joni Mitchell, Miles Davis, Carlos Santana) and the artists he believes he has influenced (Sheila E., members of the New Power Generation), an exhibit that showcases the customized Hondamatic motorcycle he rode in "Purple Rain"—have been there for years.

This part, at least, felt extraordinary to me. Genius does not always come linked to this sort of self-possession. Prince built monuments to himself in his own home, during his lifetime! He had even tested out the museum concept, periodically opening Paisley Park for guided tours. In 2000, he charged fifteen dollars for a regular tour and seventy dollars for a V.I.P. version, which included a visit to the underground parking garage where he shot the "Sexy MF" video, in 1992. Like many celebrities, he was attempting to wrest control of his own legend and contain it.

In the nineteen-eighties and nineties, Prince's critics often characterized him as despotic, self-righteous, vain, and arrogant, but, later on, the narrative shifted. Perhaps there was a sense that not very many people could or would make music like his anymore—that we had reached the end of some line. His work began to feel increasingly inimitable and precious. The year he died, he sold more albums than any living artist.

Although Prince's estate has disregarded some of his preferences—his discography is now available on Spotify, a platform he pulled his music from in 2015, in part because he believed that the company didn't compensate artists properly—there's something profound about how Paisley Park insists on maintaining Prince's privacy. It does not need to modernize him (which feels unnecessary), or even to humanize him (which feels impossible). In 2016, the most common response to Prince's death was disbelief. His self-presentation was so carefully controlled that he never once betrayed his own mortality. He'd done nothing to make us think he was like us. During parties, Prince sometimes stood in a dark corner of the balcony and watched other people dance. Visiting Paisley Park now evokes a similar sensation—of being near Prince, but never quite with him. ♦

LETTER FROM LONDON

SCANDAL

A top P.R. firm engaged in dirty spin in South Africa—and destroyed itself in the process.

BY ED CAESAR

On January 14, 2016, four publicists from Bell Pottinger, one of London's leading public-relations firms, flew to Johannesburg and met with a potential client: Oakbay Investments, a company controlled by Atul, Ajay, and Tony Gupta, three of South Africa's most powerful businessmen. The Guptas, brothers who had holdings in everything from uranium mining to newspapers, maintained close ties with Jacob Zuma, the President of South Africa, and were notorious for having leveraged this connection for profit and influence. Three members of Zuma's family had worked in Gupta-owned businesses.

In 2015, South Africans staged large protests against Zuma's Administration, calling it inept and corrupt. They also accused the Guptas, who were born in India, of running a "shadow government" that swung procurement decisions their way and appointed government ministers aligned with their interests. That December, an adviser to BNP Paribas Securities South Africa told Bloomberg News that the relationship between Zuma and the Guptas was "deeply troubling," noting, "This goes beyond undue influence."

Tony Gupta attended the Johannesburg meeting, as did Tim Bell, one of Bell Pottinger's founders. Lord Bell, perhaps the best-known figure in British public relations, has worked for decades in South Africa, including a stint as an adviser to President F. W. de Klerk, the final leader of the apartheid era. Bell can be charming or cutthroat, as the moment requires. After tea was served, Bell recalls, he sat through "an hour and a half of Tony Gupta lecturing us on how wonderful he was—he'd made so much money, he didn't need to make any more money, he was just a good man, he had empowered brown people, he was very well connected to the government, knew Zuma very well."

Gupta requested Bell Pottinger's help in launching a P.R. campaign to highlight economic inequality in South Africa. The goal was to persuade South Africans of color that they were far poorer than they should be, mainly because large white-owned corporations had outsized power. The campaign, Gupta suggested, would not only be beneficial to the country but would also bolster his family's financial position, by casting the brothers not as overstepping oligarchs but as outsiders countering white supremacy.

Bell told me that Gupta's proposal did not strike him as cynical; he found it "eminently reasonable." On January 18th, he e-mailed James Henderson, Bell Pottinger's C.E.O., and described the P.R. campaign's theme as one of "economic emancipation," adding, "The trip was a great success."

Against competition from another London agency, Bell Pottinger won the account, and Oakbay agreed to a monthly fee of a hundred and thirty thousand dollars, plus costs, for a three-month trial period. In addition to launching the economic-emancipation campaign, Bell Pottinger would provide traditional P.R. services for Oakbay, including "crisis communications."

Bell Pottinger's work in South Africa included the covert dissemination of articles, cartoons, blog posts, and tweets implying that the Guptas' opponents were upholding a racist system. As the brothers' influence over Zuma's government fell under increasing scrutiny, Bell Pottinger's tactics were exposed. More details of the Oakbay account became public, including revelations about the inflammatory economic-emancipation campaign. Soon, one of the world's savviest reputation-management companies became embroiled in a reputational scandal. Bell Pottinger could not contain the uproar, and, in September, 2017, it collapsed.

By the time of its demise, Bell Pottinger, which was founded by Bell and his longtime colleague Piers Pottinger, had existed, in various incarnations, for nearly twenty years. Bell began his career in advertising, in the sixties, and joined Saatchi & Saatchi in 1970. Nine years later, he began advising the Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher, and helped shape some of her most effective messages, including the "Labour Isn't Working" campaign, which attacked the Labour Party's record on employment. Thatcher—or the She-wolf, as Bell affectionately calls her—remains his political lodestar. "The right is called 'the right' because it *is*," he told me, at his town house, in Belgravia.

It was shortly after Bell Pottinger's implosion, and he related his past and his idiosyncratic world view while smoking a succession of cigarettes. (I stopped counting at eight.) He was seventy-five, much thinner than in his heyday, with hawkish features. He had suffered two strokes, most recently in 2016, and was unsteady on his feet. At one point, his fiancée, Jacky Phillips, entered the room, asking him if he was experiencing a "sugar dip" and needed a snack. Despite his frailty, Bell's eyes danced behind his thick-rimmed spectacles.

Bell became a publicist in the eighties, advising companies, politicians, celebrities, and royalty, and also foreign governments and politicians. When he started in P.R., he told me, "corporate communications was regarded as like peeing down your trouser leg—it gave you a nice warm feeling when it first happened, but it goes cold and wet pretty quickly." He boasted, "What we did was move the public-relations advisers from being senders of press releases and lunchers



Tim Bell, one of London's most powerful publicists, is vocally unrepentant about representing dictators and oligarchs.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DAVID M. BENETT/GETTY; MARTIN RHODES/GALLO IMAGES/BUSINESS DAY/GETTY; FOTO24/GALLO IMAGES/GETTY; DAVID M. BENETT/BELL POTTINGER/GETTY

ILLUSTRATION BY BEN JONES

with journalists into serious *strategists*."

As a former adman, Bell is adept at exploiting images. In 2006, assassins affiliated with the Russian government fatally poisoned the Russian dissident and former spy Alexander Litvinenko, who was living in London. Bell, working on behalf of Litvinenko, urged his family to release a photograph of him in the hospital. It was a masterstroke. The picture, showing Litvinenko hairless, with eerily yellow skin, instantly became a symbol of the ruthlessness of Putin's regime.

Bell did not hesitate, however, to represent dubious political figures. In 1989, in Chile, he worked on the Presidential campaign of Hernán Büchi, a former finance minister for the dictator General Augusto Pinochet. (Büchi lost the election.) Bell also worked for the Pinochet Foundation, which, in 1998, successfully campaigned against efforts to extradite Pinochet to Spain, where a judge had issued a warrant for his arrest on charges of torture and murder. Among Bell's other notorious clients are Alexander Lukashenko, the dictator of Belarus; Asma al-Assad, the wife of the Syrian strongman Bashar; and government representatives of the repressive state of Bahrain.

Bell is hardly alone in performing such work. London has become a honeypot for the international super-rich, especially in the past twenty years, as the city has emerged as the world's financial center. A network of services is available to oligarchs, sheikhs, and mandarins with the proper investment profiles. Lawyers, accountants, fund managers, and real-estate agents have become a kind of butler class to the extraordinarily wealthy, helping them to reinvest or to hide their wealth. (Actual butlers can be hired, too.) Publicists like Bell manage the public images of rich and powerful people from around the globe. In 2010, the *Guardian* called London the "world capital of reputation laundering."

Most publicists are discreet about working with controversial figures, but Bell is vocally unrepentant about it. A publicist, he argues, merely allows clients to have a voice in public discussions that affect them. As Bell presented it to me, access to an expensive London P.R. firm was a right as fundamental as access to a defense lawyer.

Bell emphasized that he was not without scruples, saying that his "personal morals" would stop him working for someone as cruel as Robert Mugabe, the former dictator of Zimbabwe, whose regime had killed or tortured tens of thousands of his own people. And Bell noted that he had dropped Lukashenko after the Belarusian President failed to implement electoral reforms. (A partner at Bell Pottinger told me that the Belarus account was easy to relinquish, because Lukashenko's Russian handler had stopped paying his fees.) Nevertheless, Bell Pottinger reflected its co-founder's lack of squeamishness. According to another partner at the firm, publicists at rival agencies, when debating whether to represent a questionable individual, used to joke that the answer was either "Yes," "No," or "One for Bell Pottinger."



In the summer of 2011, Bell Pottinger executives received an inquiry from a potential client, the Azimov Group, which described itself as an international team of investors in the cotton trade who had links to the government of Uzbekistan. The inquiry should have raised concerns. Uzbekistan's cotton industry was reported to be reliant on government-enforced child labor. The country's leader, Islam Karimov, was a de-facto dictator, and his security services had been accused of manifold abuses, including the torture of political opponents. In 2002, there were credible reports that two dissidents had been boiled alive.

A Bell Pottinger executive quickly replied to the Azimov Group, saying that some of his colleagues would be "delighted to talk to you about how we might best support your enterprise." Two representatives of the Azimov Group soon came to Bell Pottinger's main office, in Holborn. Firm executives told them that they'd take the job only if the Uzbek government pursued a "reform agenda." Nobody expressed broader concerns about polishing the image of a dictatorship.

The Bell Pottinger executives proposed a monthly fee of about a hundred and thirty thousand dollars. They boasted about their political connections, noting that one executive at the firm, Tim Collins, had worked with George Osborne, who was now the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and with David Cameron, who had become the Prime Minister. Collins told the Azimov representatives, "There is not a problem in getting messages through to them." The executives also discussed what they called the "dark arts" of optimizing Google searches and editing Wikipedia pages in favor of clients. Collins said that Bell Pottinger's goal

would be "to get to the point where, even if they type in 'Uzbek child labor' or 'Uzbek human-rights violation,' some of the first results that come up are sites talking about what you guys are doing to address and *improve* that, not just the critical voices saying how terrible this all is."

The meetings, however, were an ambush. The Azimov Group was a fake entity, and the two "representatives" were undercover reporters from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. Both were using hidden cameras. A front-page story soon appeared in the *Independent* with the headline "CAUGHT ON CAMERA: TOP LOBBYISTS BOASTING HOW THEY INFLUENCE THE PM."

After the article was published, P.R. agencies in London were subjected to heavy scrutiny, and legislators in Parliament started a campaign to create a registry of lobbyists, similar to one that exists in the United States. Bell's response was to express outrage at the B.I.J.'s subterfuge. He reported the *Independent* to the Press Complaints Commission, which rebuffed him. Eventually, he took some heat out of the scandal by ordering an internal inquiry. In an interview with the *Evening Standard,* Bell promised that "every person here is searching their souls."

In July, 2012, Bell Pottinger, which at the time was owned by a publicly traded company, Chime Communications, went private, in a management buyout. Bell Pottinger was then worth about forty-one million dollars. Bell couldn't afford to take the business private himself, even after he arranged bank loans and an investment from Chime. And so he invited another publicist at Bell Pottinger, James Henderson, to join the buyout. Bell barely knew Henderson, but he was aware that Henderson had money: he'd made millions of dollars when a financial-P.R. firm that he'd launched was acquired by Bell Pottinger in 2010.

Henderson, whose features combine sorrow and pep in a way that calls to mind a spaniel, was worried about losing his fortune, but he took the risk. He became Bell Pottinger's largest shareholder, and also its C.E.O. Bell was named chairman. Henderson told me recently that he'd believed in the "fairy dust" of Bell's reputation, and thought that they would succeed together.

The deal wasn't entirely satisfying to Bell: although he was a more famous and charismatic publicist than Henderson, and was twenty-three years his senior, he held a smaller stake in the company. Henderson, meanwhile, hoped to use his position at Bell Pottinger to become a star himself. "He wanted to be the go-to guy for P.R. in London," one partner said. "The problem is that, whilst he's a good businessman, he's not a good manager. He's a bit socially awkward."



Henderson wanted the company to leave behind the "one for Bell Pottinger" caricature by shifting its focus to blue-chip corporate work. He announced that Bell Pottinger was establishing an ethics committee that would assess clients who might prove controversial. (This may have been a P.R. gesture in itself: several people at the firm say that the committee met rarely, if ever.)

The buyout required Bell Pottinger to take on sixteen million dollars' worth of bank debt, and Henderson set ambitious targets to reduce that burden. In 2012, the firm represented only one company on the F.T.S.E. 100, the primary index of the London Stock Exchange; by 2016, it had seven. It also became more creative in its pitches. Henderson remembers painting a meeting room red in order to impress a delegation from Virgin Money, Richard Branson's finance group. (Virgin's logo is red.) Bell Pottinger won the account.

To the chagrin of many Bell Pottinger employees, however, the firm's efforts to reduce debt were felt most keenly in its lower echelons: employees say that their compensation was mediocre. Henderson's salary, meanwhile, rose to about seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. He became known for his "social mountaineering," as two of his employees put it, and often threw parties attended by celebrities and minor royals. In 2015, through a mutual friendship with the Duchess of York, Henderson met his future fiancée, Heather Kerzner, an American socialite who previously had been married to the South African hotelier Sol Kerzner.

Bell, for his part, had negotiated a basic salary of about $1.5 million a year, plus such perks as a chauffeur and what colleagues called his "pocket money"—bundles of cash for expenses. Bell also demanded a separate office for his division, the geopolitical team, in a town house in Mayfair, the most expensive area of London. The house featured a commissioned sculpture, "Ascension," consisting of four hundred tiny naked white bodies suspended from the ceiling. To make up for all the spending, another partner added, Bell "was reduced to more and more scratching around for the despots and other difficult communications jobs from around the world."

Almost immediately, Bell and Henderson clashed. "We didn't agree about how you run a company," Bell told me. At one of their first meetings, he recalled, "I lost my temper with him, because he said something that was really stupid, and I shouted at him. And he got all huffy and said, 'If you're going to shout at me then I won't speak to you.' I continued to lose my temper and walked out." The root of the problem, Bell said, was jealousy: "He can't bear that I've got a bigger personality than him, and I'm better at the job. He *hates* me." (Henderson declined to comment on his relationship with Bell.)

The discord intensified in 2014, after Bell published a memoir, "Right or Wrong." While promoting it, he spoke to the *Financial Times* and said, of bankers, "They're all complete criminals. The whole bloody lot." The reporter asked him if such opinions might sit uncomfortably with Bell Pottinger's financial-services clients. "That's the problem," Bell said. "You're not allowed to tell the truth. Isn't that disgusting?" In Henderson's eyes, Bell had gone from being a flashy figurehead to being a threat to the company. In a series of meetings, Henderson pleaded with Bell to work part time. Bell was insulted by the idea, and rejected it. By early 2016, when Bell made the trip to South Africa, both men sensed that a brutal confrontation between them was inevitable.

When Bell won the Oakbay account, he didn't just secure a large monthly fee; he opened a front in South Africa that could lead to a significant amount of new business. Such a success



"I'd invite you in, but tracking a wildebeest and then crushing its skull has made me want to get up early tomorrow morning and invent agriculture."

would make Bell even harder to dislodge. Fortunately for Henderson, a large portion of the account was directed to the corporate-and-financial team, which was outside Bell's bailiwick. In the war between Bell and Henderson, fees were ammunition.

Perhaps because the top executives at Bell Pottinger were focussed on internal rivalries, nobody involved in the decision to represent the Guptas appears to have deeply weighed the risk of working for such toxic figures. Henderson told me that, for the first three months of the account, he was not adequately briefed on the Guptas' reputation. Yet the brothers were constantly in the news during this period. In March, 2016, an African National Congress politician claimed that Ajay Gupta had met with him and offered him the post of minister of finance, with an accompanying bribe of forty-four million dollars. The politician alleged that Zuma's son Duduzane had engineered the meeting. (Representatives of the Guptas have denied that any such meeting took place.)

Henderson also could have sought the counsel of South African executives at Bell Pottinger. When Daniel Thöle, a partner from Johannesburg who mostly did P.R. work for mining companies, heard that the firm had signed the Guptas, he was appalled. Concluding that Bell Pottinger had become "morally and commercially untenable," he soon left the firm. Thöle recently told me, "People want to work for an ethical business, and be advised on their reputation by an ethical business."

The Oakbay account was initially split in two. Bell's geopolitical team would oversee the economic-emancipation campaign; Victoria Geoghegan and Nick Lambert, from the corporate-and-financial team, would work on countering public "misperceptions" about Oakbay. The work of the two teams often overlapped, however. They shared crisis-communications duties, addressing some of the more damaging allegations of corruption against the Guptas. The division of duties caused friction, with geopolitical-team members sometimes complaining of being "frozen out" by the corporate-and-financial team.

According to two former partners, when Tony Gupta awarded the account to Bell Pottinger he included a caveat: he did not want any more face-to-face meetings with Bell, having found him obnoxious. As a result, Bell oversaw the geopolitical team's work from London. Much of its work on Oakbay was performed by Jonathan Lehrle, a publicist who had grown up in South Africa. Lehrle, a favorite of Bell's, had worked on many election campaigns, particularly in Africa. (Lehrle claims that the account was overseen by the corporate-and-financial side, and that he and his geopolitical colleagues acted "solely in an advisory capacity"; internal e-mails and documents, however, show that he regularly participated in discussions about the account.)

Bell Pottinger's efforts went far beyond representing Oakbay. According to internal Bell Pottinger documents, the Guptas asked the firm to portray Duduzane Zuma as a "businessman in his own right." Bell Pottinger also began offering talking points about "economic apartheid" to South African politicians, including Collen Maine, the leader of the A.N.C. Youth League. In a speech in February, 2016, Maine said that "the two richest individuals in South Africa have fifty per cent of the economy."

The economic-apartheid rhetoric reflects an uncomfortable truth about South Africa: despite making progress since the end of apartheid, it remains a profoundly unequal country, and the financial divides among ethnic groups are stark. But Bell Pottinger laid mines in its own path by working on behalf of the Guptas. One of its other clients was Richemont, the Swiss-based luxury-goods business, which is controlled by Johann Rupert, South Africa's second-richest man. Rupert became one of the targets of the economic-apartheid campaign. Notwithstanding the shaky ethics of a London P.R. firm inflaming a debate about racial and economic inequality in South Africa in order to benefit a rich family with government connections, the Oakbay work was a flagrant conflict of interest. Victoria Geoghegan had spun for Richemont herself, and Bell's relationship with Johann Rupert stretched back decades.

On February 11, 2016, a debate in South Africa's Parliament, in Cape Town, descended into chaos. Members of the Economic Freedom Fighters, a radical party led by Julius Malema, disrupted the proceedings, and were ejected from the chamber. On their way out,

they began chanting "Zupta Must Fall!" The conflation of "Zuma" and "Gupta" soon became commonplace in South Africa. The families' fates were politically and linguistically entangled.

That day, Bell Pottinger began what it called a "front-foot campaign" to "get the Guptas' message out there to counteract negative and threatening press." Publicists on the account contacted a prominent South African journalist, Stephen Grootes, telling him that, if he agreed to sign a nondisclosure agreement, he could interview "an important person." Grootes complied, and was informed that the subject was Ajay Gupta.

Bell Pottinger insisted on recording the interview. A representative promised to hand over the footage to Grootes after a "light edit." Grootes agreed to the arrangement, but said that he would make a simultaneous recording.

The interview took place on February 16th. Gupta sounded defensive as he deflected questions about corruption. Grootes asked him if any of his family members had flown to Switzerland with the South African minerals minister, in the hope of securing a mining deal between a Gupta-controlled business and the mining giant Glencore. "Rubbish," he said. (In fact, according to an investigation by the South African government, Tony Gupta met with the minister in Switzerland.) Bell Pottinger executives, likely aware that Gupta's performance was disastrous, shelved their footage; they also did not return Grootes's recording equipment. A digital copy of the interview was buried on Bell Pottinger's server in London. Grootes felt hoodwinked, but, having signed the nondisclosure agreement, he couldn't press his case in public.

That March, the South African bank Investec severed its P.R. contract with Bell Pottinger, because it objected to the firm's work for the Guptas. This caused alarm among some Bell Pottinger employees, but it did not unduly trouble the firm's senior management. On March 22, 2016, shortly before the trial contract with Oakbay was set to expire, Bell e-mailed Victoria Geoghegan, the publicist, in his characteristically loose style: "on your trip to joberg and capetown this week you are not authorised to agree to go on handling the gupta account nor to resign the account, merely to assess the situation and then report back."

According to several people at the firm, it should have been obvious that the only prudent choice was to resign the Oakbay account. At weekly meetings in the Holborn office, several partners and associates asked their managers why Bell Pottinger was representing the Guptas. "You don't mess with South Africa," one partner said. "*Especially* from London."

At a meeting that spring, the executive chairman of the corporate-and-financial division responded to internal questions about Oakbay by saying that the Guptas' companies were audited by K.P.M.G., an international firm with stringent compliance procedures. The chairman's argument, an attendee told me, was essentially this: "If they pass K.P.M.G.'s sniff test, they should be fine for us." A few days after that meeting, however, K.P.M.G. dropped Oakbay. Other banks in South Africa, including Standard Chartered, began refusing to service Gupta-linked accounts. It was another signal for Bell Pottinger to discontinue its relationship with Oakbay.

On March 24, 2016, Victoria Geoghegan sent an e-mail to Bell, Henderson, and other executives, which summed up the company's choice: "As we have known from the start, we are in the middle of a civil war with the Guptas and allies on one side, and Johann Rupert and others on the other side. More mud will inevitably be thrown. However, it is difficult to turn down such a large retainer."



Bell told me that, around this time, he became opposed to renewing the Oakbay account after Johann Rupert left him a message expressing concern that Bell Pottinger was working for the Guptas. "I said it was the wrong thing to do," Bell told me. "Johann Rupert was a client. And I wasn't sure why we were doing something against his interests. I instructed everyone to stop working for the Guptas, and they completely ignored me."

The contract was renewed, on a rolling monthly basis. Henderson, however, told me that both he and Bell agreed to the terms. An "anti-embarrassment clause" was attached, allowing Bell Pottinger to exit the contract if the worst allegations against the Guptas, such as the bribery accusations, were confirmed. Henderson's version of events appears to be borne out by e-mails. In a message from April, 2016, Bell suggested that the Gupta brothers move their banking operations to Nigeria, in order to bypass the South African banking blockade.

After the account was renewed, Bell Pottinger continued to draft talking points on economic emancipation, including one noting that "inequality in South Africa is greater today than at the end of apartheid." It also commissioned advertisements claiming that South African banks had threatened the livelihoods of Oakbay employees. On April 18th, the Bell Pottinger team asked an Israeli digital-reputation service, Veribo, to help suppress negative Google results about the Guptas. (The company, which has changed its name to Percepto, has said, "We now regret our involvement.")

Bell Pottinger's efforts on behalf of the Guptas became increasingly ugly. I recently reviewed sections of a 2017 report about the Gupta affair, which Henderson commissioned from the law firm Herbert Smith Freehills. (The full text has not been released to the public.) According to the report, in the summer of 2016 a publicist on the Oakbay account set up a Web site, voetsekblog.co.za, with a related Facebook page and Twitter feed. In Afrikaans, *voetsek* means "go away." The Web site's content, which was mostly aggregated from other sources, highlighted racial and economic disparities in South Africa. Its home page read "You know what they say, don't get mad get even so it's time to cause some havoc. For too long black South Africans have been left out of the economy . . . our economy."

The Twitter account, @Voetsek_SA, posted similar messages and many cartoons. Some of the drawings were produced by the Guptas' newspaper network; others were commissioned by Bell Pottinger. Many of them were offensive. One image that appeared on @Voetsek_SA shows a table of fat, rich-looking white people—one of

whom resembles Johann Rupert—gorging on food while emaciated black people eat crumbs off the floor. An army of bots linked to the Guptas promoted the cartoons on Twitter.

The Web site, the Facebook page, and the Twitter feed have since been scrubbed from the Internet. Branko Brkic, the editor of the South African newspaper the *Daily Maverick*, whose reporters covered the Bell Pottinger story, told me that the firm's deployment of the Guptas' cynical strategy was "beyond the pale." He said, "Bell Pottinger literally stole the page from Goebbels and applied it to twenty-first-century South Africa. That's just plain evil. They were going well beyond their brief. It's almost as if they felt *pleasure* doing it."

When Henderson later apologized for the firm's work on the Oakbay account, he wrote that Bell Pottinger contained many "good, decent people who will be as angered by what has been discovered as we are." Indeed, most Bell Pottinger employees did ordinary P.R. work, often for such unimpeachably bland companies as the grocery chain Waitrose. But it is also true that the underhanded tactics used on the Oakbay account were part of the firm's DNA, particularly in the geopolitical division.

In 2011, during the Arab Spring, Bahrain erupted in protests against the royal family. At the time, Bell Pottinger was advising the Bahrain Economic Development Board, and on occasion its brief extended to advising the Bahraini government more generally. The government responded to the protests with a repressive backlash. Bell Pottinger's digital team prepared for its Bahraini clients a list of the most influential dissidents on social media. An employee involved in this work does not know the fate of the individuals on the list, but he remains troubled by the fact that Bell Pottinger performed this service at a time when Bahraini officials were imprisoning and torturing people who spoke out against the regime. The Bahrain account brought in three and a half million dollars annually.

In the same period, the firm also worked for Abdul Taib Mahmud, the chief minister of Sarawak, a state in eastern Malaysia. He had held the post since 1981, and was seeking his eighth term. Opposition figures frequently called Taib corrupt. One journalist who criticized Taib was Clare Rewcastle Brown, who lives in London but was born in Sarawak. She is the sister-in-law of Gordon Brown, the former Labour Prime Minister of the U.K. In 2011, Rewcastle Brown was subjected to a series of smears by a blog called Sarawak Bersatu, which described itself as representing a "group of Sarawakians who aim to protect Sarawak against the influences—and hidden agendas—of foreign political groups and activists." Material posted on Sarawak Bersatu, and on a related Twitter feed, impugned the motives and the reporting practices of Rewcastle Brown and called her an agent of British socialism. The site promoted stories falsely claiming that one of her colleagues had engaged in sexual improprieties. According to a former Bell Pottinger employee with knowledge of the site, the firm generated Sarawak Bersatu's material. This was "fake news" before it had a name. When I informed Rewcastle Brown that Bell Pottinger was behind Sarawak Bersatu, she said that she had "no idea this was being run out of London."

A former Bell Pottinger partner expressed shock when I described the Bahrain and Sarawak accounts. It was possible, he said, to draw a straight line between these episodes and the South African scandal. The partner said the Sarawak work suggested that certain people within Bell Pottinger had "a playbook."

One publicist who helped write the Bell Pottinger playbook is Mark Turnbull, who worked at the firm from 1995 to 2012, and often focussed on geopolitical accounts, including in South Africa and Iraq. He subsequently became a top executive at Cambridge Analytica, the British firm that advised Donald Trump's 2016 Presidential campaign. The company fell apart earlier this year, after its harvesting of Facebook user data was exposed. Shortly before Cambridge Analytica's collapse, undercover journalists at Channel 4 News, in London, secretly recorded Turnbull describing his modus operandi. He bragged about the deployment of misinformation against a client's political opponents. "We just put information into the bloodstream of the Internet, and then, and then watch it grow, give it a little push every now and again," Turnbull explained. "It has to happen without anyone thinking, That's propaganda. Because the moment you think, That's propaganda, the next question is: Who's put that out?"

Until 2016, Bell and Henderson had an equal number of supporters on the company's board, but that summer one of Bell's oldest allies, Mark Smith, indicated that he could no longer support him, allowing Henderson to take control of Bell Pottinger. Bell resigned. As Bell sees it, Smith "turned on me and stabbed me in the back!" (Smith told me, "I do not want to talk about it.")

Bell threatened to sue the company for wrongful dismissal, and demanded a $6.7-million severance payment. Eventually, he told me, he settled for four million dollars. (Henderson claims that the payout was significantly lower.) Bell later sold company stock worth $1.3 million. Even though he had been given a soft landing, he was enraged by his ejection. A former colleague recalls Bell saying, "It's *my* company—it's *my* name above the door."

Publicly, Bell has told several journalists, including me, that he had resigned in protest, because Bell Pottinger had refused to drop the Oakbay account. When I questioned this claim, Bell clarified that he had resigned "not *entirely* over the Gupta crisis, actually over the challenge to my authority. But the Gupta thing was an exaggerated version of it."

It's hard to see how Bell's two stories—that he was stabbed in the back, and that he resigned in protest—can coexist. In any event, he left the company in August, 2016. Later that year, Jonathan Lehrle, one of the geopolitical publicists on the Oakbay account, also left Bell Pottinger. He founded a new P.R. agency, Sans Frontières Associates, and named Bell its chairman. Within months, Sans Frontières had hired several other former Bell Pottinger publicists.

When I interviewed Bell at his town house, he told me that his departure had caused a catastrophic leadership vacuum at Bell Pottinger, which ultimately led to the failure of the business. He compared the company to the U.K. after Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister, in 1990. "The moment I'd gone, the grip went," Bell said. "They say that Thatcher had a grip on Britain when she was in power, and the moment she left the grip went." Bell warmed to his


THE ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL HIERARCHY
AT THE TOP WAS MANDY, THE MOST POPULAR GIRL. SHE HAD DOMINION OVER EVERY LIFE-FORM IN OUR CLASS, WITH THE HELP OF HER ADVISER, TIFF—
—AND HER COUSIN, JOSH, WHO WAS THE BIGGEST, LOUDEST, AND MOST POPULAR BOY.
JOSH'S THREE MANSERVANTS WERE ALL NAMED JOSH: JOSH THE ATHLETIC, JOSH THE CHARMING, AND JOSH THE CLOWN.
MANDY AND TIFF WERE WAITED UPON BY SEVEN MAIDENS: MELISSA, JEN, RACHEL, ALLY, RACHEL II, SHULI, AND SARAH.
THE COOL NON-JOSH BOYS WERE NAMED JAKE, JEREMY, JONATHAN, NATHAN, AND ALON.
THE GIRLS WHO WISHED THEY WERE COOL WERE ILANA, AVIVA, STEPHANIE, DASHA, SVETLANA, AND BETH.
(LAUREN DIDN'T WANT TO BE COOL. SHE LIKED SCIENCE FICTION.)
THE UNCOOL BOYS COMPRISED TWO BULLIES (OFER AND ANATOLE) AND FOUR NERDS: DANNY, DAVID, ILAN, AND ARI.


I WAS OVER HERE.



"I'm a bargain hunter."

• •

theme: "Henderson doesn't understand the basic principle of running a public-relations company, which is money in, money out. Subtract one from another, and if you've got a red number you're in shit, and if you've got a black number you're fine. It took him a year to take it into complete loss-making."

This narrative, I told him, omitted the overwhelming reason that clients had dropped Bell Pottinger: the Oakbay scandal, in which he had played a significant role. Bell brushed this off, countering that Henderson "didn't get any new business." He added, "That's all to do with him, his leadership. Business was roaring in while I was running the place."

In October, 2016, Thuli Madonsela, the Public Protector of South Africa, whose mandate is to expose threats to the country's democratic system, published a report titled "State of Capture." It described "alleged improper and unethical conduct by the President," and chronicled Zuma's corrupt dealings with the Guptas.

According to Madonsela, the Guptas had indeed acted as a shadow government, using cash bribes and promises of ministerial promotions to further their financial interests. In the report, a parliamentarian named Vytjie Mentor charged that, in a meeting, the Guptas had told her she could become the minister for public enterprises, as long as she agreed to make South African Airways drop its Johannesburg-to-Mumbai service. The Guptas had links to the owners of a rival airline that coveted the route. When Mentor demurred, President Zuma himself emerged from a nearby room and escorted her out. (Representatives of the Guptas denied that the meeting took place.)

Around the time that "State of Capture" was released, reports of Bell Pottinger's work for the Guptas appeared in the South African media. In response, Richemont, Johann Rupert's company, and Mediclinic, in which Rupert also holds a large share, cut ties with Bell Pottinger. That November, at Richemont's annual general meeting, Rupert denounced Bell Pottinger: "While they were working for us, they started working for the Guptas. Their total task was to deflect attention. . . . Guess who was the target? A client of theirs—me!"

Rupert added that Bell Pottinger had described the white-owned businesses supposedly in control of South Africa's economy as "white monopoly capital." Rupert's accusation went viral, and it soon became a widespread notion in South Africa that Bell Pottinger had invented this term. In fact, academics have used the phrase for years, but Bell Pottinger certainly helped popularize it. The Twitter account that it launched to support the Guptas regularly promoted content referring to "monopoly capital." Shortly after Rupert's speech, a twenty-three-minute portion of Stephen Grootes's interview with Ajay Gupta leaked on YouTube. Evidently, someone had downloaded the video from Bell Pottinger's server.

Despite the negative press and the loss of accounts, Bell Pottinger continued working with the Guptas. Henderson says the Oakbay team reassured him that the allegations against the brothers had not been proved, and that Bell Pottinger's work was ethical. In any case, the firm began losing money in 2016; it was no time for a weak stomach.

Some former Bell Pottinger employees say that Henderson's decision to maintain the Oakbay account can be attributed not just to financial pressure but to his arrogant management style. (One of them said that he could be an "aggressive little bully" who ignored contrary views.) Others believe that Henderson had been distracted by the feud with Bell and by his romantic life: he had recently divorced the mother of his four children and begun dating Kerzner. Henderson told me that the explanation was simpler: "I made an error of judgment."

In March, 2017, a twenty-one-page dossier titled "Bell Pottinger PR Support for the Gupta Family" began circulating in South African government circles. Although its author was anonymous, it had

an oddly personal tone, citing seemingly irrelevant details about people on the Oakbay account, such as the fact that a wedding venue in Tuscany where Victoria Geoghegan had been married rented for twenty thousand dollars a week. The document also contained explosive accusations, including that Bell Pottinger employees had created Twitter bots on behalf of the Guptas and had colluded with Jacob Zuma on messaging. Henderson vigorously denied these claims, and the Herbert Smith Freehills report later found them to be false.

The dossier's author seemed intent on associating the Gupta account with Geoghegan, who was described as "leading the project," and with Henderson, who was said to "not care one bit" about criticism of Bell Pottinger's decision to work with the Guptas. In one passage, a "former partner" pointedly exculpates Bell: "When the Gupta project first arose, senior members of the Geopolitical team, including Bell, were quite outspoken that we should not do it." Henderson and Geoghegan, the dossier alleges, saw the account merely as "a lucrative contract," and never "appreciated how divisive the project would be and the implications it might have, specifically on the Geopolitical team, who were seeing the immediate impact of the company's decision to work with the Guptas in their marketing meetings."

To some Bell Pottinger partners, the sudden appearance of the dossier, along with the earlier leaks of sensitive material and the Stephen Grootes interview, suggested that Bell and his allies at Sans Frontières were attempting to destroy Bell Pottinger. One partner considers it an "open-and-shut" case. Many details that leaked to South African journalists in November, 2016, including the fee structure of the Oakbay account, were known only to Bell, Henderson, and the four people working daily on behalf of the Guptas. The Grootes interview, meanwhile, was uploaded to YouTube with a comment referring to a nickname for the account, Project Biltong, that was known only to the publicists who had worked on it.

South African government officials handed the dossier to other journalists, who were told that its findings came from former Bell Pottinger partners with "operational" knowledge of the Oakbay account. A South African media source told me that he understood the dossier's sources to be former Bell Pottinger employees who wanted to "exact as much hurt as possible on Bell Pottinger itself."

On March 19, 2017, the *Sunday Times* of South Africa ran a long article based on the dossier, which suggested that Bell Pottinger had been hired by the Guptas to "divert public outcry" from "state capture" to "white monopoly capital." The report cites a former Bell Pottinger "insider" saying that Bell left the firm because he disapproved of its work for Oakbay.

Two weeks later, the entire dossier was published on the South African Communist Party's Web site. Solly Mapaila, the Party official who posted it, told me that an anti-Zuma group had given it to him. According to a former South African government official, among the document's sources were "insiders within Bell Pottinger"; he declined to name the insiders, but reminded me that some people at Bell Pottinger had worked for President de Klerk. The only partner or senior manager who had worked for de Klerk was Bell. (Bell has repeatedly denied any involvement with the dossier or its distribution.)

The dossier had its desired effect. South Africans were outraged by the revelation that a British P.R. firm had meddled in their nation's politics. To many of them, Bell Pottinger's actions felt not just irresponsible but colonial.



On social media, a campaign was launched against Bell Pottinger and its staff. In April, 2017, thousands of South Africans marched against Zuma's government, and some protesters carried posters denouncing Bell Pottinger. One poster showed Victoria Geoghegan's photograph along with the slogan "Gupta's Girl." That month, Bell Pottinger issued a statement claiming that many assertions in the dossier were "wholly untrue," and that a "politically motivated" campaign was being waged against the firm. But it conceded that the campaign had worked—Bell Pottinger could no longer be an "effective advocate" for Oakbay. It was dropping the account.

Henderson told me that, on reading the dossier, he realized that forces were conspiring "against Bell Pottinger, and, to a certain extent, *me*."

Relinquishing the Oakbay account did not contain the damage. In South Africa, Bell Pottinger had become inextricably linked with the "Zupta" project and with the insidious propagation of the "white monopoly capital" theme. The Guptas, for their part, continued their aggressive tactics. According to a newspaper investigation, one of their employees built a Web site that promoted false stories about critics of the brothers. Peter Bruce, a South African journalist who had called the Guptas corrupt, became the subject of a smear campaign claiming that he'd cheated on his wife. (Bruce and two other journalists targeted in this fashion recently filed suit against Bell Pottinger's insurer, A.I.G. Europe, for defamation and breach of privacy.)

In May, 2017, more than a hundred thousand e-mails relating to the Guptas were leaked to the media. Among them were messages detailing Bell Pottinger's work for Oakbay. The e-mails appear to have been obtained from a server at Sahara Computers, one of the Guptas' companies. The hashtag #bellpottingermustfall became popular on Twitter, and Bell Pottinger employees received a stream of hate mail. The South African Tourist Board, a Bell Pottinger client, severed ties with the agency.

The "optics," as publicists like to say, could not have been worse. Henderson attempted to stop the firm's tailspin by ordering the Herbert Smith Freehills review of the Oakbay account. However, while the company was handing documents to the law firm's investigators, Henderson says, he learned about the Voetsek site. He was taken aback. He called Victoria Geoghegan on a boardroom speakerphone, and asked her to explain how the site had been created. I obtained a transcript of the exchange.

Geoghegan told Henderson that Jonathan Lehrle, the South African-born

publicist, had come up with the site. He had advised the team to create something that captured the gossipy feel of the British blog Guido Fawkes, a pro-Brexit, Thatcherite site that the *Guardian* has described as "a cross between a comic and a propaganda machine." The idea was that Voetsek would host content on economic emancipation from other news sources. (Lehrle told me that Voetsek was a group creation, not his alone, but he admitted that he thought up the name. Moreover, a briefing document from March, 2016, written by Lehrle, proposed creating a blog that contained "emotive language" and "powerful imagery.")

"The whole site is racially motivated," Henderson told Geoghegan, adding, "We've *denied* that we did this!"

Geoghegan explained that the Oakbay team had commissioned a cartoonist to create work for the site.

"I could never put our company's name to this, do you accept that?" Henderson asked.

"It wasn't branded 'Bell Pottinger,'" Geoghegan said. She then noted that "the creation of the Web site was under Tim Bell."

"You allowed me to keep denying the allegations, and losing clients, when we were actively using this Web site!" Henderson said. "We have lied."

"The allegations that we were *asked* about we did not lie about," Geoghegan said. She repeated that Bell had signed off on the Voetsek site, but told Henderson that, as C.E.O., he needed to take responsibility. "*Everyone* knew that economic emancipation was the campaign!" Geoghegan said. "I don't believe you can say you were unaware."

That day, Henderson fired Geoghegan and suspended three other people who'd worked on the Oakbay account. He then issued an "absolute" public apology for the firm's work on a "social-media campaign" in South Africa that was "inappropriate and offensive."

The next day, Bell told the *Financial Times* that Henderson "knew all about it from the very beginning."

By July, 2017, Bell Pottinger was hated by many South Africans, but the scandal did not gain traction in the United Kingdom until the Herbert Smith Freehills report was commissioned and Geoghegan was fired. Soon after British journalists took note of the Gupta account, the Democratic Alliance, a liberal South African opposition party, organized protests outside Bell Pottinger's headquarters. The Democratic Alliance also filed a complaint with the Public Relations and Communications Association, a U.K. trade group to which the firm belonged.

On September 4th, the association concluded that Bell Pottinger had violated its code of conduct. Henderson, who knew of the verdict in advance, resigned the day before it was announced. At that point in the scandal, he recalled, the loss of clients had caused a drop in revenue of about eight per cent—a "survivable amount," as he put it. His resignation, he hoped, might stanch the bleeding.

Bell Pottinger was expelled from the Public Relations and Communications Association for five years, the harshest possible sanction. At a press conference, Francis Ingham, the group's chairman, declared that Bell Pottinger had "brought the P.R.-and-communications industry into disrepute." In media interviews, Ingham called Bell Pottinger's work for Oakbay "the most blatant instance of unethical P.R. practice I've ever seen," and declared that the firm had "set back South Africa by possibly ten years."

Ingham's outrage struck some observers as hypocritical. George Pitcher, a former publicist who is now a priest, wrote, in Politico, that the association looked "like a bunch of pimps throwing up their hands in horror at the moral turpitude of their highest-earning whore." Senior figures at Bell Pottinger speculated that Ingham's tone had been influenced by Bell, with whom Ingham is friendly. Only a few months earlier, Ingham had inducted Bell into an international P.R. hall of fame, saying that Bell had "created modern P.R." and "elevated our work." Three days after Bell Pottinger's expulsion from the association, Ingham and Bell were spotted having lunch together.

Herbert Smith Freehills, meanwhile, published a skeleton account of its findings. It reported, "While we do not consider that it was a breach of relevant ethical principles to agree to undertake the economic emancipation campaign mandate *per se*, members of B.P.'s senior management should have known that the campaign was at risk of causing offence, including on grounds of race. In such circumstances B.P. ought to have exercised extreme care and should have closely scrutinised the creation of content for the campaign. This does not appear to have happened."

That evening, a former managing director of Bell Pottinger, David Wilson, who left the firm in 2015, learned that Tim Bell was shortly to be interviewed on the BBC program "Newsnight." Wilson was an investor in Bell Pottinger, and had friends who still worked there. Believing that Bell could fatally damage the firm, Wilson sent him a text urging restraint: "Tim please remember some of us shareholders . . . this is dire for us."

Bell did not reply.

The "Newsnight" interview was widely perceived as embarrassing. Bell, who was wearing a suit with a polo shirt underneath, had left his phone on, and it rang twice during the segment. On the first occasion, Bell fumbled with the device before turning its screen toward the interviewer, Kirsty Wark, with a puckish grin. "Look who it is!" Bell stage-whispered. The caller was Johann Rupert, the founder of Richemont.

Bell said of Oakbay, "I had nothing to do with getting this account!" He continued, "Of course, James Henderson is to blame."

Wark asked Bell, "Do you think this is curtains for Bell Pottinger?"

"Almost certainly," Bell said. "But that's nothing to do with me."

"It doesn't strike *anyone* as possible that you could be the innocent in all this," Wark said.

"Well, I'm sorry, but I am," Bell said.

Wilson, like many former and current Bell Pottinger employees, watched the interview with dismay. To outsiders, Bell had come across as a floundering old man. But many former colleagues, who knew how skilled he could be with the media, saw a calculated performance, down to the ringing cell phone. "Tim doesn't do very much by accident," one of them said. Despite the seemingly amateurish display, Bell had delivered two messages with clarity: Bell Pottinger was in grave trouble, and Henderson was at fault.

The next morning, the headline of the London newspaper *City A.M.* was "BELL ROTTINGER." All day, the firm hemorrhaged clients. Chime Communications, which had been attempting to sell its stake in Bell Pottinger, announced that it was simply giving up its shares.

Crisis communications was one of Wilson's specialties—he had steered Rebekah Brooks, the former editor of the *News of the World*, through the infamous phone-hacking scandal—and he tried again to reach Bell. He felt that if he could persuade Bell to stop talking to reporters the firm might survive.

Bell met Wilson for coffee the next morning at a restaurant in Sloane Square, arriving in a chauffeur-driven town car, which idled in a no-parking zone as they spoke. They sat outside, so that Bell could smoke. (Bell says that he has no recollection of the meeting, but text messages confirm that he and Wilson met at the restaurant.)

Wilson asked Bell to keep quiet, for the sake of his former colleagues. Bell refused, noting that journalists were calling *him*. Wilson recalls his saying, "I can't lie!" Bell admitted that he was also determined to get back at Henderson for pushing him out of the company. As Wilson remembers it, Bell used the word "revenge."

"I was trying to protect the business," Wilson told me. "He was intent on murdering it."

As the difficult exchange drew to a close, Bell said, "Today's a big day for them with Bahrain." The Bahrain account was Bell Pottinger's largest, and without it the firm would implode. Bell mentioned teasingly that his friend Lord Chadlington advised the Bahrainis on communications matters. Wilson realized that Bell was signalling his awareness that Bell Pottinger was already doomed.

The Bahrain account was indeed lost, and the next day Bell Pottinger was declared insolvent. Many of the firm's employees and partners lost their jobs immediately; some stayed on to help administrators wind down the business. Operations ceased within weeks. Henderson lost both his fortune and his fiancée. Kerzner had invested heavily in Bell Pottinger—she'd bought shares in 2017—and when the business collapsed so did her relationship with Henderson. They postponed a wedding planned for November.

Earlier this year, the couple reconciled. Henderson established a new P.R. firm, J&H Communications. It has signed a few clients, but even former allies of Henderson's worry that his name will forever be tainted by the Oakbay scandal. "A P.R. firm that can't manage its own reputation isn't worth much in the marketplace," one said. In April, the *Daily Mail* reported that Kerzner and Henderson had split up for good, and that she was "on the lookout for love again."

Bell's public image, meanwhile, has suffered little damage, and Sans Frontières appears to be prospering. Bell recently represented the Russian reality-TV star Ksenia Sobchak, who ran against Vladimir Putin in the 2018 Presidential election. Bell's new firm has also bid for a large account in Bahrain. His recent media appearances have felt like a victory lap. The *Mail on Sunday* noted, in a sympathetic interview, that Bell's "fame—or notoriety—has gone skywards" since he left Bell Pottinger. An article in the New York *Times* described him as having "stepped directly out of an Evelyn Waugh novel" and made note of his "ingratiating candor." On his seventy-sixth birthday, a month after Bell Pottinger's collapse, Bell married Jacky Phillips. The headline in the *Daily Mail:* "BELL POTTINGER FOUNDER BEATS HIS RIVAL JAMES HENDERSON BY MARRYING FIRST." The feud, by its own petty terms, has ended decisively in Bell's favor.

The legacy of a boardroom tussle between two privileged white businessmen in London will have a longer effect in South Africa. After the firm collapsed, Thuli Madonsela, the official who published "State of Capture," said that, in a democracy as young as South Africa's, Bell Pottinger's P.R. campaign had been "reckless and dangerous." By hijacking a legitimate debate about economic inequality on behalf of mercenary aims, the firm had poisoned political discourse in South Africa.

In mid-February, an arrest warrant was issued for Ajay Gupta, on corruption charges. But he and his brothers had apparently gone abroad. (Their whereabouts are unknown.) South Africa's national prosecutor now considers Ajay Gupta to be a "fugitive from justice," and other South African prosecutors wish to bring Atul and Tony Gupta back to South Africa to face charges. In addition, the *Financial Times* has reported that the F.B.I. is investigating the brothers' allegedly corrupt business dealings in the United States.

On February 14th, Jacob Zuma stepped down as the President of South Africa. In his resignation speech, Zuma—who had previously said that to resign would be to "surrender" to "white monopoly capital"—suggested that he had been a victim of a conspiracy. As if repeating Bell Pottinger's talking points about economic apartheid, he framed his ouster—which was primarily about his incompetence and dishonesty—as the result of racism. "I respect each member and leader of this glorious movement," Zuma said. "I respect its gallant fight against centuries of white-minority brutality, whose relics remain today and continue to be entrenched, in all manner of sophisticated ways."♦



A REPORTER AT LARGE

MEXICO FIRST

Sick of corruption and of Trump, voters embrace a maverick leftist.

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

The first time that Andrés Manuel López Obrador ran for President of Mexico, in 2006, he inspired such devotion among his partisans that they sometimes stuck notes in his pockets, inscribed with their hopes for their families. In an age defined by globalism, he was an advocate of the working class—and also a critic of the PRI, the party that has ruthlessly dominated national politics for much of the past century. In the election, his voters' fervor was evidently not enough; he lost, by a tiny margin. The second time he ran, in 2012, the enthusiasm was the same, and so was the outcome. Now, though, Mexico is in crisis—beset from inside by corruption and drug violence, and from outside by the antagonism of the Trump Administration. There are new Presidential elections on July 1st, and López Obrador is running on a promise to remake Mexico in the spirit of its founding revolutionaries. If the polls can be believed, he is almost certain to win.

In March, he held a meeting with hundreds of loyalists, at a conference hall in Culiacán. López Obrador, known across Mexico as AMLO, is a rangy man of sixty-four, with a youthful, clean-shaven face, a mop of silver hair, and an easy gait. When he entered, his supporters got to their feet and chanted, "It's an honor to vote for López Obrador!" Many of them were farmworkers, wearing straw hats and scuffed boots. He urged them to install Party observers at polling stations to prevent fraud, but cautioned against buying votes, a long-established habit of the PRI. "That's what we're getting rid of," he said. He promised a "sober, austere government—a government without privilege." López Obrador frequently uses "privilege" as a term of disparagement, along with "élite," and, especially, "power mafia," as he describes his enemies in the political and business communities. "We are going to lower the salaries of those who are on top to increase the salaries of those on the bottom," he said, and added a Biblical assurance: "Everything I am saying will be done." López Obrador spoke in a warm voice, leaving long pauses and using simple phrases that ordinary people would understand. He has a penchant for rhymes and repeated slogans, and at times the crowd joined in, like fans at a pop concert. When he said, "We don't want to help the power mafia to . . . ," a man in the audience finished his sentence: "keep stealing." Working together, López Obrador said, "we are going to make history."

The current Mexican government is led by the center-right President Enrique Peña Nieto. His party, the PRI, has depicted López Obrador as a radical populist, in the tradition of Hugo Chávez, and warned that he intends to turn Mexico into another Venezuela. The Trump Administration has been similarly concerned. Roberta Jacobson, who until last month was the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, told me that senior American officials often expressed worry: "They catastrophized about AMLO, saying things like 'If he wins, the worst will happen.'"

Ironically, his surging popularity can be attributed partly to Donald Trump. Within days of Trump's election, Mexican political analysts were predicting that his open belligerence toward Mexico would encourage political resistance. Mentor Tijerina, a prominent pollster in Monterrey, told me at the time, "Trump's arrival signifies a crisis for Mexico, and this will help AMLO." Not long after the Inauguration, López Obrador published a best-selling book called "Oye, Trump" ("Listen Up, Trump"), which contained tough-talking snippets from his speeches. In one, he declared, "Trump and his advisers speak of the Mexicans the way Hitler and the Nazis referred to the Jews, just before undertaking the infamous persecution



Proclaiming a "people's struggle" against the



country's "power mafia," Andrés Manuel López Obrador is regularly mobbed on the Presidential campaign trail.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MEGHAN DHALIWAL



"Chicken on a bed of spinach and onions?"

• •

and the abominable extermination."

Officials in the Peña Nieto government warned their counterparts in the White House that Trump's offensive behavior heightened the prospect of a hostile new government—a national-security threat just across the border. If Trump didn't modulate his behavior, the election would be a referendum on which candidate was the most anti-American. In the U.S., the warnings worked. During a Senate hearing in April, 2017, John McCain said, "If the election were tomorrow in Mexico, you would probably get a left-wing, anti-American President." John Kelly, who was then the Homeland Security chief, agreed. "It would not be good for America—or for Mexico," he said.

In Mexico, remarks like Kelly's seemed only to improve López Obrador's standing. "Every time an American politician opens their mouth to express a negative view about a Mexican candidate, it helps him," Jacobson said. But she has never been sure that Trump has the same "apocalyptic" view of AMLO. "There are certain traits they share," she noted. "The populism, for starters." During the campaign, López Obrador has decried Mexico's "pharaonic government" and promised that, if he is elected, he will decline to live in Los Pinos, the Presidential residence. Instead, he will open it to the public, as a place for ordinary families to go and enjoy themselves.

After Jacobson arrived in Mexico, in 2016, she arranged meetings with local political leaders. López Obrador kept her waiting for months. Finally, he invited her to his home, in a distant, unfashionable corner of Mexico City. "I had the impression he did that because he didn't think I would come," she said. "But I told him, 'No problem, my security guys can make that work.'" Jacobson's team followed his directions to an unremarkable two-story town house in Tlalpan, a middle-class district. "If part of the point was to show me how modestly he lived, he succeeded," she said.

López Obrador was "friendly and confident," she said, but he deflected many of her questions and spoke vaguely about policy. The conversation did little to settle the issue of whether he was an opportunistic radical or a principled reformer. "What should we expect from him as President?" she said. "Honestly, my strongest feeling about him is that we don't know what to expect."

This spring, as López Obrador and his advisers travelled the country, I joined them on several trips. On the road, his style is strikingly different from that of most national politicians, who often arrive at campaign stops in helicopters and move through the streets surrounded by security details. López Obrador flies coach, and travels from town to town in a two-car caravan, with drivers who double as unarmed bodyguards; he has no other security measures in place, except for inconsistent efforts to obscure which hotel he is staying in. On the street, people approach him constantly to ask for selfies, and he greets them all with equanimity, presenting a warm, slightly inscrutable façade. "AMLO is like an abstract painting—you see what you want to see in him," Luis Miguel González, the editorial director of the newspaper *El Economista*, told me. One of his characteristic gestures during speeches is to demonstrate affection by hugging himself and leaning toward the crowd.

Jacobson recalled that, after Trump was elected, López Obrador lamented, "Mexicans will never elect someone who is not a politician." This was telling, she thought. "He is clearly a politician," she said. "But, like Trump, he has always presented himself as an outsider." He was born in 1953, to a family of shopkeepers in Tabasco state, in a village called Tepetitán. Tabasco, on the Gulf of Mexico, is bisected by rivers that regularly flood its towns; in both its climate and the feistiness of its local politics, it can resemble Louisiana. One observer recalled that López Obrador joked, "Politics is a perfect blend of passion and

reason. But I'm *tabasqueño*, a hundred per cent passion!" His nickname, El Peje, is derived from *pejelagarto*—Tabasco's freshwater gar, an ancient, primitive fish with a face like an alligator's.

When López Obrador was a boy, his family moved to the state capital, Villahermosa. Later, in Mexico City, he studied political science and public policy at UNAM, the country's premier state-funded university, writing his thesis about the political formation of the Mexican state, in the nineteenth century. He married Rocío Beltrán Medina, a sociology student from Tabasco, and they had three sons. Elena Poniatowska, the doyenne of Mexican journalism, recalls meeting him when he was a young man. "He has always been very determined to get to the Presidency," she said. "Like an arrow, straight and unswerving."

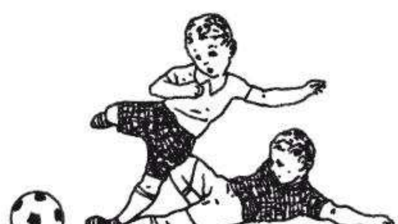
For a person with political aspirations, the PRI was then the only serious option. It had been founded in 1929, to restore the country after the revolution. In the thirties, President Lázaro Cárdenas solidified it as an inclusive party of socialist change; he nationalized the oil industry and provided millions of acres of farmland to the poor and the dispossessed. Over the decades, the Party's ideology fluctuated, but its hold on power steadily grew. Presidents chose their successors, in a ritual called the *dedazo*, and the Party made sure that they were elected.

López Obrador joined the PRI after college, and, in 1976, he helped direct a successful Senate campaign for Carlos Pellicer, a poet who was friends with Pablo Neruda and Frida Kahlo. López Obrador rose quickly; he spent five years running the Tabasco office of the National Indigenous Institute, and then leading a department of the National Consumer Institute, in Mexico City. But he felt increasingly that the Party had strayed from its roots. In 1988, he joined a left-wing breakaway group, led by Lázaro Cárdenas's son, that grew into the Partido Revolucionario Democrático. López Obrador became the Party chief in Tabasco.

In 1994, he made his first attempt at electoral office, running for governor of the state. He lost to the PRI's candidate, whom he accused of having won through fraud. Although a court inquiry did not lead to a verdict, many Mexicans believed him; the PRI has a long record of rigging elections. Soon after the election, a supporter handed López Obrador a box of receipts, showing that the PRI had spent ninety-five million dollars on an election in which half a million people voted.

In 2000, he was elected mayor of Mexico City, a post that gave him considerable power, as well as national visibility. In office, he built a reputation as a rumpled everyman; he drove an old Nissan to work, arriving before sunrise, and he reduced his own salary. (When his wife died, of lupus, in 2003, there was an outpouring of sympathy.) He was not averse to political combat. After one of his officials was caught on tape seeming to accept a bribe, he argued that it was a sting, and distributed comic books that depicted himself fighting against "dark forces." (The official was later cleared.) At times, López Obrador ignored his assembly and governed by edict. But he also proved able to compromise. He succeeded in creating a pension fund for elderly residents, expanding highways to ease congestion, and devising a public-private scheme, with the telecommunications magnate Carlos Slim, to restore the historic downtown.

When he left office to prepare for the 2006 Presidential elections, he had high approval ratings and a reputation for getting things done. (He also had a new wife, a historian named Beatriz Gutiérrez Müller; they now have an eleven-year-old son.) López Obrador saw an opportunity. In the last election,



the PRI had lost its long hold on power, as the Partido de Acción Nacional won the Presidency. The PAN, a traditionalist conservative party, had support from the business community, but its candidate, Felipe Calderón, was an uncharismatic figure.

The campaign was hard fought. López Obrador's opponents ran television ads that presented him as a deceitful populist who posed "a danger for Mexico" and showed images of human misery alongside portraits of Chávez, Fidel Castro, and Evo Morales. In the end, López Obrador lost by half of one per cent of the vote—a margin slim enough to raise widespread suspicions of fraud. Refusing to recognize Calderón's win, he led a protest in the capital, where his followers stopped traffic, erected tented encampments, and held rallies in the historic Zócalo and along Reforma Avenue. One resident recalled his giving speeches in "language that was reminiscent of the French Revolution." At one point, he conducted a parallel inauguration ceremony in which his supporters swore him in as President. The protests lasted months, and the residents of Mexico City grew impatient; eventually, López Obrador packed up and went home.

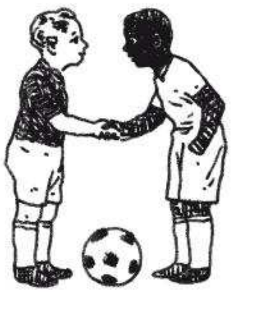
In the 2012 election, he won a third of the vote—not enough to defeat Peña Nieto, who returned the PRI to power. But Peña Nieto's government has been tarnished by corruption and human-rights scandals. Ever since Trump announced his candidacy with a burst of anti-Mexican rhetoric, Peña Nieto has tried to placate him, with embarrassing results. He invited Trump to Mexico during his campaign and treated him as if he were already a head of state, only to have him return to the U.S. and tell a crowd of supporters that Mexico would "pay for the wall." After Trump was elected, Peña Nieto assigned his foreign minister, Luis Videgaray, who is a friend of Jared Kushner's, to make managing the White House relationship his highest priority. "Peña Nieto has been extremely accommodating," Jorge Guajardo, a former Mexican Ambassador to China, told me. "There's nothing Trump has even hinted at that he won't immediately comply with."

In early March, before López Obrador's campaign had officially begun, we travelled through northern Mexico, where resistance to him is concentrated. His base of support is in the poorer, more agrarian south, with its majority indigenous population. The north, near the border with Texas, is more conservative, tied both economically and culturally to the southern United States; his task there was not so different from presenting himself to the Houston Chamber of Commerce.

In speeches, he tried to make light

of his opponents' accusations, cracking jokes about receiving "gold from Russia in a submarine" and calling himself "Andrés Manuelovich." In Delicias, an agricultural hub in Chihuahua, he swore not to overextend his term in office. "I'm going to work sixteen hours a day instead of eight, so I will do twelve years' work in six years," he said. This rhetoric was backed by more pragmatic measures. As he travelled through the north, he was accompanied by Alfonso (Poncho) Romo, a wealthy businessman from the industrial boomtown of Monterrey, whom López Obrador had selected as his future chief of staff. A close adviser told me, "Poncho is key to the campaign in the north. Poncho is the bridge." In Guadalajara, López Obrador told the audience, "Poncho is with me to help convince the businessmen who have been told we're like Venezuela, or with the Russians, that we want to expropriate property, and that we're populist. But none of that is true—this is a government made in Mexico."

At a lunch with businessmen in Culiacán, the capital of Sinaloa state, López Obrador tested some ideas. "What we want to do is to carry out the transformation that this country needs," he began. "Things can't go on as they are." He spoke in a conversational tone, and the crowd gradually seemed to grow more sympathetic. "We're going to end the corruption, the impunity, and the privileges enjoyed by a small élite," he said. "Once we do, the leaders of this country can recover their moral and political authority. And we'll also clean up the image of Mexico in the rest of the world, because right now all that Mexico is known for is violence and corruption."



López Obrador spoke about helping the poor, but when he talked about corruption he focussed on the political class. "Five million pesos a month in pension for ex-Presidents!" he said, and grimaced. "All of that has to end." He noted that there were hundreds of Presidential jets and helicopters, and said, "We're going to sell them to Trump." The audience laughed, and he added, "We'll use the money from the sale for public investment, and thus foment private investment to generate employment."

During these early events, López Obrador was adjusting his message as he went along. His campaign strategy seemed simple: make lots of promises and broker whatever alliances were necessary to get elected. Just as he promised his Party faithful to raise workers' salaries at the expense of senior bureaucrats, he promised the businessmen not to increase taxes on fuel, medicine, or electricity, and vowed that he would never confiscate property. "We will do nothing that goes against freedoms," he declared. He proposed establishing a thirty-kilometre duty-free zone along the entire northern border, and lowering taxes for companies, both Mexican and American, that set up factories there. He also offered government patronage, vowing to complete an unfinished dam project in Sinaloa and to provide agricultural subsidies. "The term 'subsidy' has been satanized," he said. "But it is necessary. In the United States they do it—up to a hundred per cent of the cost of production."

Culiacán is a former stronghold of the brutal Sinaloa cartel, which has been instrumental in the flood of drug-related violence and corruption that has subsumed the Mexican state. Since 2006, the country has pursued a "war on drugs" that has cost at least a hundred thousand lives, seemingly to little good effect. López Obrador, like his opponents, has struggled to articulate a viable security strategy.

After the lunch in Culiacán, he took questions, and a woman stood to ask what he intended to do about narcotrafficking. Would he consider the legalization of drugs as a solution? A few months earlier, he had said, seemingly without much deliberation, that he might offer an "amnesty" to bring low-level dealers and producers into legal employment. When critics leaped on his remark, his aides tried to deflect criticism by arguing that, because none of the current administration's policies had worked, anything was worth trying. To the woman in Culiacán, he said, "We're going to tackle the causes with youth programs, new employment opportunities, education, and by tending to the abandoned countryside. We're not only going to use force. We'll analyze everything and explore all the avenues that will let us achieve peace. I don't rule out anything, not even legalization—nothing." The crowd applauded, and AMLO looked relieved.

For López Obrador's opponents, his ability to inspire hope is worrisome. Enrique Krauze, a historian and commentator who has often criticized the left, told me, "He reaches directly into the religious sensibilities of the people. They are seeing him as a man who will save Mexico from all of its evils. Even more important, he believes it, too."

Krauze has been concerned about López Obrador ever since 2006. Before the Presidential elections that year, he published an essay titled "The Tropical Messiah," in which he wrote that AMLO had a religious zeal that was "puritanical, dogmatic, authoritarian, inclined toward hatred, and above all, redemptory." Krauze's latest book—"El Pueblo Soy Yo," or "I Am the People"—is about the dangers of populism. He examines the political cultures in modern Venezuela and Cuba, and also includes a scathing assessment of Donald Trump, whom he refers to as "Caligula on Twitter." In the preface, he writes about López Obrador in a tone of oracular dismay. "I believe that, if he wins, he will use his charisma to promise a return to an Arcadian order," he says. "And with that accumulated power, arrived at thanks to democracy, he will corrode democracy from within."

What worried Krauze, he explained, was that if López Obrador's party won big—not just the Presidency but also a majority in Congress, which the polls suggest is likely—he might move to change the composition of the Supreme Court and dominate other institutions. He could also exercise tighter control over the media, much of which is supported by state-sponsored advertising. "Will he ruin Mexico?" Krauze asked. "No, but he could obstruct Mexico's democracy by removing its counterweights. We've had a democratic experiment for the past eighteen years, ever since the PRI first lost power, in 2000. It is imperfect, there is much to criticize, but there have also been positive changes. I'm worried that

MY FRIENDS DON'T GET BURIED

My friends don't get buried
in cemeteries anymore, their wives
can't stand the sadness
of funerals, the spectacle
of wreaths and prayers, tear-soaked
speeches delivered from the altar,
all those lies and encomiums,
the suffocating smell of flowers
filling everything.
No more undertakers in black suits
clutching handkerchiefs,
old buddies weeping in corners,
telling off-color stories, nipping shots,
no more covered mirrors,
black dresses, skullcaps and crucifixes.
Sometimes it takes me a year or two
to get out to the back yard in Sheffield
or Fresno, those tall ashes scattered
under a tree somewhere in a park
somewhere in New Jersey.
I am a delinquent mourner
stepping on pinecones, forgetting to pray.
But the mourning goes on anyway
because my friends keep dying
without a schedule,
without even a funeral,
while the silence
drums us from the other side,
the suffocating smell of flowers
fills everything, always,
the darkness grows warmer, then colder,
I just have to lie down on the grass
and press my mouth to the earth
to call them
so they would answer.

—*Edward Hirsch*

with AMLO this experiment might end."

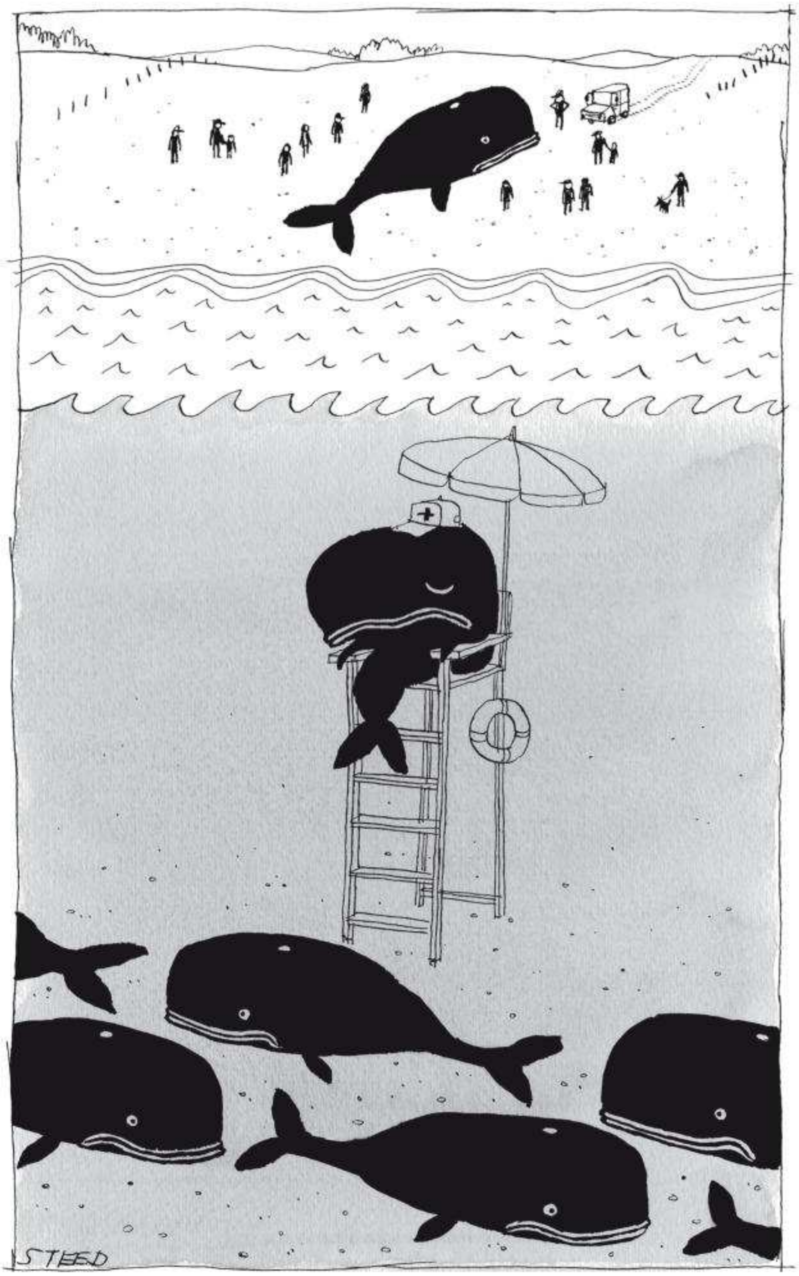
Over dinner in Culiacán one night, López Obrador picked at a steak taco and talked about his antagonists on the right, alternating between amusement and concern. A few days earlier, Roberta Jacobson had announced that she was stepping down as Ambassador, and the Mexican government had immediately endorsed a prospective replacement: Edward Whitacre, a former C.E.O. of General Motors who happened to be a friend of the tycoon Carlos Slim. This was a nettlesome point for López Obrador. He had recently argued with Slim over a multibillion-dollar plan for a new Mexico City airport, which Slim was involved in. The scheme was a public-private venture with Peña Nieto's government, and López Obrador, alleging corruption, had promised to stop it. (The government denies any malfeasance.) "We are hoping it doesn't mean they are planning to interfere against me," López Obrador said, of Whitacre and Slim. "Millions of Mexicans would take offense at that."

Recently, the Peruvian novelist and politician Mario Vargas Llosa—who serves as an oracle for the Latin American right—had said publicly that if AMLO won office it would be "a tremendous setback for democracy in Mexico." He added that he hoped the country would not commit "suicide" on Election Day. When I mentioned the remarks, López Obrador grinned and said that Vargas Llosa was in the news mostly for his marriage to "a woman who always married up, and was always in *Hola!* magazine." He was referring to the socialite Isabel Preysler, a former wife of the singer Julio Iglesias, for whom Vargas Llosa had abandoned his marriage of fifty years. López Obrador asked if I'd seen his response, in which he'd called Vargas Llosa a good writer and a bad politician. "You notice," he said wickedly, "I didn't call him a *great* writer."

On April 1st, López Obrador officially launched his campaign, before a crowd of several thousand people in Ciudad Juárez. On a stage set up in a plaza, he stood with his wife, Beatríz, and several of his cabinet picks. "We have come here to initiate our campaign, in the place where our fatherland begins," he said. The stage stood under a grand statue of Mexico's revered nineteenth-century leader Benito Juárez, an avowed hero of López Obrador's. Juárez, a man of humble Zapotec origins who championed the cause of the disenfranchised, is a kind of Abraham Lincoln figure in Mexico—an emblem of unbending honor and persistence. Looking at the statue, López Obrador said that Juárez was "the best President Mexico ever had."

In López Obrador's speech, he likened the current administration to the despots and colonists who had controlled the country before the revolution. He attacked the "colossal dishonesty" that he said had characterized the "neoliberal" policies of Mexico's last few governments. "The country's leaders have devoted themselves . . . to concessioning off the national territory," he said. With his Presidency, the government would "cease to be a factory that produces Mexico's nouveaux riches."

López Obrador often speaks of admiring leaders from the nineteen-thirties—including F.D.R. and the PRI head Lázaro Cárdenas—and much of his social program recalls the initiatives of those years. In his launch speech, he said that he intended to develop the south of the country, where the agricultural economy has been devastated



by inexpensive U.S. food imports. To do this, he proposed to plant millions of trees for fruit and timber, and to build a high-speed tourist train that would connect the beaches of the Yucatán Peninsula with Mayan ruins inland. The tree-planting project alone would create four hundred thousand jobs, he predicted. With these initiatives, he said, people in the south would be able to stay in their villages and not have to travel north for work.

Across the country, he would encourage construction projects that used hand tools rather than modern machinery, in order to boost the economy in rural communities. Pensions for the elderly would double. There would be free Internet in Mexico's schools, and in its public spaces. Young people would be guaranteed scholarships, and then jobs after graduation. He wanted "*becarios sí, sicarios no*"—scholarship students, not contract killers.

For many audiences, especially in the south, these proposals are appealingly simple. When López Obrador is asked how he will pay for them, he tends to offer a similarly seductive answer. "It's not a problem!" he said, in one speech. "There is money. What there *is* is corruption, and we're going to stop it." By getting rid of official corruption, he has calculated, Mexico could save ten per cent of its national budget. Corruption is a major issue for López Obrador. Marcelo Ebrard, his chief political aide, says that his ethics are informed by a "Calvinist streak," and even some skeptics have been persuaded of his sincerity. Cassio Luiselli, a longtime Mexican diplomat, told me, "I don't like his authoritarian streak and confrontational style." But, he added, "he seems to me to be an honest man, which is a lot to say in these parts."

López Obrador has vowed that his first bill to Congress would amend an article in the constitution that prevents sitting Mexican Presidents from being tried for corruption. This would be a symbolic deterrent, but an insufficient one; in order to root out corruption, he'd have to purge huge swaths of the government. Last year, the former governor of Chihuahua, charged with embezzlement, fled to the U.S., where he is evading efforts at extradition. More than a dozen other current and former state governors have faced criminal investigations. The attorney general who led some of those inquiries was himself reported to have a Ferrari registered in his name at an unoccupied house in a different state, and, though his lawyer argued that it was an administrative error, he resigned not long afterward. The former head of the national oil company has been accused of taking millions of dollars in bribes. (He denies this.) Peña Nieto, who ran as a reformer, was involved in a scandal in which his wife obtained a luxurious house from a developer with connections to the government; later, his administration was accused of using spyware to eavesdrop on opponents. According to reporting in the *Times*, state prosecutors have declined to pursue damning evidence against PRI officials, to avoid harming the Party's electoral chances.

With every major party implicated in corruption, López Obrador's supporters seem to care less about the practicality of his ideas than about his promises to fix a broken government. Emiliano Monge, a prominent novelist and essayist, said, "This election really began to cease being political a few months ago and became emotional. It is more than anything a referendum against corruption, in which, as much by right

as by cleverness, AMLO has presented himself as the only alternative. And in reality he is."

For months, López Obrador's team crisscrossed the country. Arriving in a tiny cow town called Guadalupe Victoria, he told me that he had been there twenty times. After a long day of speeches and meetings in Sinaloa, we had dinner as he prepared to travel to Tijuana, where he had a similar agenda the next day. He looked a little weary, and I asked if he was planning a break. He nodded, and told me that, during Easter, he'd go to Palenque, in the southern state of Chiapas, where he had a *ranchito* in the jungle. "I go there and don't come out again for three or four days," he said. "I just look at the trees."

For the most part, though, communing with the crowds seemed to energize him. In Delicias, it took him twenty minutes to walk a single block, as supporters pressed in for selfies and kisses and held up banners that read "AMLOVE"—one of his campaign slogans. Appearances with his opponents and encounters with the media suit him less. At times, he has responded to forceful questions from reporters with a wave of his pinkie—in Mexico, a peremptory no. In 2006, he declined to attend the first Presidential debate; his opponents left an empty chair for him onstage.

There were three debates scheduled for this campaign season, and they were AMLO's to lose. By May 20th, when the second one was held, in Tijuana, polls said that he had an estimated forty-nine per cent of the vote. His nearest rival—Ricardo Anaya, a thirty-nine-year-old lawyer who is the PAN candidate—had twenty-eight per cent. José Antonio Meade, who had served Peña Nieto as finance secretary and foreign secretary, trailed with twenty-one. In last place, with two per cent, was Jaime Rodríguez Calderón, the governor of the state of Nuevo León. An intemperate tough guy known as El Bronco, he has made his mark on the campaign by suggesting that corrupt officials should have their hands chopped off.

With López Obrador in the lead, his opponents' debate strategy was to make him look defensive, and at times it worked. At one point, Anaya, a small man with the buzz-cut hair and frameless glasses of a tech entrepreneur, walked across the stage to confront López Obrador. At first, AMLO reacted mildly. He reached for his pocket and exclaimed, "I'm going to protect my wallet." The mood lightened. But when Anaya challenged him on one favorite initiative, a train line connecting the Caribbean and the Pacific, he was so affronted that he called Anaya a *canalla*, a scoundrel. He went on, using the diminutive form of Anaya's first name to create a rhyming ditty that poked fun at his stature: "Ricky, *riquín, canallín*."

When Meade, the PRI candidate, criticized López Obrador's party for voting against a trade agreement, AMLO replied that the debate was merely an excuse to attack him. "It's obvious, and, I would say, understandable," he said. "We are leading by twenty-five points in the polls." Otherwise, he hardly bothered to look Meade's way, except to wave dismissively at him and Anaya and call them representatives of "the power mafia."

Nevertheless, his lead in polls only grew. Two days later, in the resort town of Puerto Vallarta, thousands of fans surrounded his white S.U.V., holding it in place until police opened a pathway. On social media, video clips circulated of well-wishers bending down to kiss his car.

Ever since he lost the election of 2006, López Obrador has presented himself as an avatar of change. He founded a new party, the National Regeneration Movement, or MORENA, which Duncan Wood, the director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center, described as evocative of the early PRI—an effort to sweep up everyone who felt that Mexico had gone astray. "He went around the country signing agreements with people," Wood said. "'Do you want to be part of a change? Yes? Then sign here.'" MORENA has an increasing number of sympathizers but relatively few official members; last year, it had three hundred and twenty thousand, making it the country's fourth-largest party. As López Obrador's campaign has gathered strength, he has welcomed partners that seem profoundly incompatible. In December, MORENA forged a coalition with the P.T., a party with Maoist origins; it also joined with the PES, an evangelical Christian party that opposes same-sex marriage, homosexuality, and abortion. Some of his aides intimate that López Obrador could sever these ties after he wins, but not everyone is convinced. "What terrifies me most are his political alliances," Luis Miguel González, of *El Economista*, told me.

At a rally in the town of Gómez Palacio, some of these alliances collided messily. In an open-air market on the edge of town, P.T. partisans occupied a large area near the stage—an organized bloc of young men wearing red T-shirts and waving flags with yellow stars. Onstage with López Obrador was the Party's chief, Beto Anaya. One of López Obrador's aides winced visibly and grumbled, "That guy has quite a few corruption scandals." (Anaya denies accusations against him.) As local leaders gathered, a young woman walked to the microphone, and boos erupted from the crowd. The aide explained that the woman was Alma Marina Vitela, a MORENA candidate who had formerly been with the PRI. The booing gathered strength, and Vitela stood frozen, looking at the crowd, seemingly unable to speak. López Obrador strode over, put his arm around her, and took the microphone. "We need to leave our differences and conflicts behind," he said. The booing quickly stopped. "The fatherland is first!" he shouted, and cheers broke out.

With the P.T. partisans in the audience, López Obrador's speech took on a distinctly more radical edge. "This party is an instrument for the people's struggle," he said, and added, "In union there is strength." He went on, "Mexico will produce everything it consumes. We will stop buying from abroad." After each of his points, the P.T. militants cheered in unison, and someone banged a drum.

Over dinner that night, we spoke about MORENA's prospects. López Obrador boasted that, although the party remains considerably smaller than its rivals, it was able to reliably mobilize partisans. "There are few movements on the left in Latin America with the power to put people on the street anymore," he said.

Not long before, a prominent Communist leader in the region had told me that the Latin American left was largely dead, because there were almost no unions anymore. Unions were once

a powerhouse of regional politics, supplying credibility and votes; in recent decades, many have succumbed to corruption or internal divisions, or have been co-opted by business owners. López Obrador smiled when I mentioned it. The largest Mexican miners' union had recently offered to support his campaign. In 2006, the head of the union, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, was charged with trying to embezzle a workers' trust fund of fifty-five million dollars; he fled to Canada, where he obtained citizenship and wrote a best-selling book about his travails. In López Obrador's telling, he had been punished for taking on mine owners. "They own everything, and they call the shots," he said.

Urrutia was exonerated in 2014, but he still felt that he was vulnerable to new charges if he returned. López Obrador took up his cause, offering him a seat in the Senate, which would provide him immunity from prosecution. López Obrador's critics were enraged. "You should have seen the outcry!" he said. "They really attacked me. But it's dying down again now." With a mocking look, he said, "I told them that, if the Canadians thought he was fine, then maybe he wasn't so bad after all." Rolling his eyes, he said, "You know, here they think the Canadians are all things good."

López Obrador told me that he also had the backing of the teachers' union, then hastened to clarify: "The unofficial one—not the corrupted official one." Peña Nieto's government had passed educational reforms, and the measures had been unpopular with teachers. "They are now with us," he said, then added, "The official—compromised, corrupted—teachers' union has also given me its support." He grimaced. "This is the kind of support one doesn't really need, but in a campaign you need support, so we will go forward, and hope to find ways to clean them up."

A few weeks later, I rejoined López Obrador on the road in Chihuahua, Mexico's biggest state. South of Ciudad Juárez and its dusty belt of low-wage factories, Chihuahua is cowboy country—a wide-open place of vast prairies and forested mountains. For several days, we drove hundreds of miles back and forth through the rangelands.

This territory had once been a base for Pancho Villa's revolutionary army in its fight against the dictator Porfirio Díaz; the landscape was dotted with the sites of battles and mass executions. One day, outside a men's bathroom at a rest stop, López Obrador looked out at the plain, waved his arms, and said, "Villa and his men marched all through these parts for years. But just imagine the difference: he and his men covered most of these miles by horse, while we're in cars."

López Obrador has written half a dozen books on Mexico's political history. Even more than most Mexicans, he is aware of the country's history of subjugation and sensitive to its echoes in the rhetoric of the Trump Administration. When we stopped for lunch at a modest restaurant off the highway, he spoke of the invasion of 1846, known in the U.S. as the Mexican-American War and in Mexico as the United States' Intervention in Mexico. That conflict ended with the humiliating cession of more than half the nation's territory to the United States, but López Obrador saw in it at least a few examples of valor. At one point during the war, he said, Commodore Matthew Perry arrayed a huge U.S. fleet off the coast of Veracruz. "He had overwhelming superiority, and sent word to the commander of the town to surrender so as to save the city and its people," he said. "And you know what the commander told Perry? 'My balls are too big to fit into your Capitol building. Get it on.' And so Perry opened fire, and devastated Veracruz." López Obrador laughed. "But pride was saved." For a moment, he mused about whether victory was more important than a grand gesture that could mean defeat. Finally, he said he believed that the grand gesture was important—"for history's sake, if for nothing else."

We were interrupted by members of the family that ran the restaurant, politely asking for a selfie. As López Obrador got up to oblige them, he said, "This country has its personalities—but Donald Trump!" He raised his eyebrows in disbelief, and, with a laugh, hit the table with both hands.

Early in Trump's term, López Obrador presented himself as an antagonist; along with his condemnatory speeches, he filed a complaint at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in Washington, D.C., protesting the Administration's border wall and its immigration policy. When I mentioned the wall to him, he smiled scornfully and said, "If he goes ahead with it, we will go to the U.N. to denounce it as a human-rights violation." But he added that he had come to understand, from watching Trump, that it was "not prudent to take him on directly."

On the campaign trail, he has generally resisted grand gestures. Not long before the speech in Gómez Palacio, Trump sent National Guard troops to the Mexican border. López Obrador suggested an almost pacifist response: "We'll orga-



nize a demonstration along the entire length of the border—a political protest, all dressed in white!"

Mostly, López Obrador has offered calls for mutual respect. "We will not rule out the possibility of convincing Donald Trump just how wrong his foreign policy, and particularly his contemptuous attitude toward Mexico, have been," he said in Ciudad Juárez. "Neither Mexico nor its people will be a piñata for any foreign power." Offstage, he suggested that it was morally necessary to restrain Trump's isolationist tendencies. "The United States can't become a ghetto," he said. "It would be a monumental absurdity." He said that he hoped to be able to negotiate a new rapport with Trump. When I expressed skepticism, he pointed to Trump's fluctuating comments about the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un: "It shows that his positions aren't irreducible ones, but made for appearances' sake." Behind the scenes, López Obrador's aides have reached out to counterparts in the Trump Administration, trying to establish working relationships.

A more aggressive position would give López Obrador little advantage over his opponents in the campaign. When I asked Jorge Guajardo, the former Ambassador, what role Trump had at this point in the election, he said, "Zero. And for a very simple reason—everyone in Mexico opposes him equally." In office, though, he could find that it is in his interest to present more forceful resistance. "Look at what happened to those leaders who right away tried to make nice with Trump," Guajardo said. "Macron, Merkel, Peña Nieto, and Abe—they've all lost out. But look at Kim Jong Un! Trump seems to like those who reject him. And I think the same scenario will apply to Andrés Manuel."

In campaign events, López Obrador speaks often of *mexicanismo*—a way of saying "Mexico first." Observers of the region say that, when the two countries' interests compete, he is likely to look inward. Mexico's armed forces and law enforcement have often had to be persuaded to coöperate with the United States, and he will probably be less willing to pressure them. The U.S. lobbied Peña Nieto, successfully, to harden Mexico's southern border against the flow of Central American migrants. López Obrador has announced that he will instead move immigration headquarters to Tijuana, in the north. "The Americans want us to put it on the southern border with Guatemala, so that we will do their dirty work for them," he said. "No, we'll put it here, so we can look after our immigrants." Regional officials fear that Trump is preparing to pull out of NAFTA. López Obrador, who has often called for greater self-sufficiency, might be happy to let it go. In the speech that launched his campaign, he said that he hoped to develop the country's potential so that "no threat, no wall, no bullying attitude from any foreign government, will ever stop us from being happy in our own fatherland."

Even if López Obrador is inclined to build a closer relationship, the pressures from both inside and outside the country may prevent it. "You can't be the President of Mexico and have a pragmatic relationship with Trump—it's a contradiction in terms," González said. "Until now, Mexico has been predictable, and Trump has been the one providing the surprises. I think it's now going to be AMLO who provides the surprise factor."

One morning in Parral, the city where Pancho Villa died, López Obrador and I had breakfast as he prepared for a speech in the plaza. He acknowledged that the transformation Villa helped bring about had been bloody, but he was confident that the transformation he himself was proposing would be peaceful. "I am sending messages of tranquillity, and I am going to continue to do so," he said. "And, quite apart from my differences with Trump, I have treated him with respect."

I told him that many Mexicans wondered whether he had moderated his early radical beliefs. "No," he said. "I've always thought the same way. But I act according to the circumstances. We have proposed an orderly change, and our strategy seems to have worked. There is less fear now. More middle-class people have come on board, not only the poor, and there are businesspeople, too."

There are limits to López Obrador's inclusiveness. Many young metropolitan Mexicans are wary of what they see as his lack of enthusiasm for contemporary identity politics. I asked if he been able to change their minds. "Not much," he said, matter-of-factly. "Look, in this world there are those who give more importance to politics of the moment—identity, gender, ecology, animals. And there's another camp, which is not the majority, but which is more important, which is the struggle for equal rights, and that's the camp I subscribe to. In the other camp, you can spend your life criticizing, questioning, and administering the tragedy without ever proposing the transformation of the regime."

López Obrador sometimes says that he wants to be regarded as a leader of the stature of Benito Juárez. I asked if he really believed that he could remake the country in such a historic way. "Yes," he replied. He looked at me directly. "Yes, yes. We are going to make history, I am clear about that. I know that when one is a candidate one sometimes says things and makes promises that can't be fulfilled—not because one doesn't want to but because of the circumstances. But I think I can confront the circumstances and fulfill those promises."

This is the message that excites his supporters and worries his opponents: a promise to transform the country without disrupting it. I thought about a speech he gave one night in Ciudad Cuauhtémoc, a neglected-looking mining town surrounded by mountains. Ciudad Cuauhtémoc was remote from most of Mexico's citizens, but people there felt the same frustrations with corruption and economic predation. The area was dominated by drug cartels, according to López Obrador's aides, and the economy was troubled. A local MORENA leader spoke with frustration about "foreign mining companies exploiting the treasures under our soil."

The audience was full of cowboys wearing hats and boots; a group of indigenous Tarahumara women stood to one side, wearing traditional embroidered dresses. López Obrador seemed at home there, and his speech was angrier and less guarded than usual. He promised his listeners a "radical revolution," one that would give them the country they wanted. " 'Radical' comes from the word 'roots,' " he said. "And we're going to pull this corrupt regime out by its roots." ♦



ILLUSTRATION BY FRANCESCO FRANCHI

Barry was trying to focus, but on what? Shapes began to materialize. Circles. Triangles. Three panels in outrageously bright colors. It was that squiggly AIDS painter guy from the nineteen-eighties. A figure fell into his head. Something he had once discussed with Seema at a gallery—1.8 million. O.K. He was on a bed. He was hungry, but at the same time beyond hunger. He turned his head. There were magazines displayed on a nightstand: a Bentley mag and a Patek Philippe mag and a *Nat Geo*. He scanned the room quickly. The Rollaboard with his watches and Shiva's rabbit toy and his passport was neatly placed at the foot of the bed. There was also a glass coffee table topped with a bottle of Fiji water, a jar of salted almonds, and familiar-looking bars of seventy-per-cent-cocoa Chocolat Madagascar. Barry crawled the length of the bed to the coffee table. He began stuffing the food into his mouth, the nuts and chocolate crunching sweet and bitter over his tongue, then poured the water into his mouth. He burped ferociously, his whole being coming back to life.

He had fled New York. Fled his wife and his son and his son's autism diagnosis. Fled his hedge fund, This Side of Capital, and all its troubles. Not that he had done anything wrong. Yes, his fund had shorted GastroLux, a pharma with a new GERD reflux medication in Phase II trial that was supposed to cure the esophageal difficulties of stressed-out yuppies belching up their Acela coffee and egg-and-sausage rolls. And, yes, he was a major shareholder in Valupro, which had almost bought GastroLux and whose management knew the drug would fail. And, yes, they had made about two hundred million on the trade, their last really successful trade. But it had all been a great big coincidence. Everyone else had piled into that trade anyway. What proof did the feds have that he'd used his relationship with Valupro to make money off the demise of GastroLux? It was like the whole of society was positioned to make sure Barry didn't make money off *anything*. It was socialism. He didn't want Trump to win, but he was glad the Obama years were sputtering to an end, even as they coincided with his own potential demise.

Barry had fled, with nothing more than a Greyhound bus ticket, six hundred dollars (he had had to ditch the Amex black card for security reasons), and his Rollaboard of watches. And now he was in Atlanta, having stumbled into Jeff Park's condo straight off the Greyhound, dehydrated and barely alive.

The lights and blinds were all Lutron, and a small closet concealed the obligatory Crestron rack for the audiovisuals, among scattered boxes of Lanvin sneakers. He peed his heart out into a Porcelanosa. The hand soap was by Molton Brown. He was definitely off the Hound and back in hedgeworld. This guest room, if that was what it was, was far better curated than the guest room Seema had put together. Jeff Park must have married well.

Barry was wearing a T-shirt with the words "Georgia Aquarium" across the chest, along with a photograph of a whale shark. Someone had changed him out of his Vineyard Vines. The Park wife again? Barry pressed the button to raise the blinds, and Atlanta appeared before him, the customary Wells Fargo and the B.B.&T. tower, but also some old-fashioned R.K.O.-style antennas and a deeply undistinguished nineteen-seventies edifice that scanned as Coca-Cola HQ. He could see that the city still brimmed with underused space, acres of lots that called out for condos and hotels. Barry looked around for his sneakers, but they were not there. He had been in Asian households before and was familiar with their war on shoes.

A corridor of chilled marble emptied into a huge living space, and there Barry felt a burst of old pre-Greyhound hedge-world jealousy. The living room was as palatial as the entrance to a modest New York museum. Enormous golden lights hung from the ceiling, which was at least twenty feet high—he knew the company that made them. Seema liked their work, but the high ceilings of their New York apartment were not high enough. Judging simply by the measurements of the great room, he sized the apartment at forty-five hundred square feet, minimum. This from a guy Akash Singh had fired from This Side of Capital, a guy who'd had to clear out his desk within an hour, as a security guard hulked in the corner, watching his every move. Barry tried to console himself with the fact that Atlanta property, even at its gilded peak, would still cost a third of what it cost in New York. O.K., let's say forty-five hundred square feet at five hundred a foot—that would be what? Just two bucks and a quarter? In New York, anything below five million didn't even qualify as luxury.

Lost as he was in his real-estate reverie, he failed to notice the sporty exhales of the property owner himself, who was performing an impressive bout of pushups in the middle of the light-filled space. Jeff Park still had his thick Asian hair, if not more of it, and he was clothed in some kind of black athletic gear that maybe would allow for scuba diving or travel to Mars. Eventually, Jeff Park noticed his former employer casting a shadow over him. He hopped up from the floor in one youthful, thirty-something motion. "Barry," he said. "You're alive!"

Full head of hair, gums that didn't recede, pushups in the middle of the day. Jeff Park had gone to Cornell, if Barry remembered correctly, but had not played lacrosse. A fit striver with good, casual taste. He was to be approached just like a potential investor. Barry was ready to do a little Princeton two-step with a perfectly calibrated friend move. He shook his host's hand eagerly.

"Jeff, right off the bat, thank you," he said. "You didn't have to welcome me into your home."

"I'm just glad we didn't need an ambulance," Jeff Park said. "Although I did call for a house visit from my family doctor."

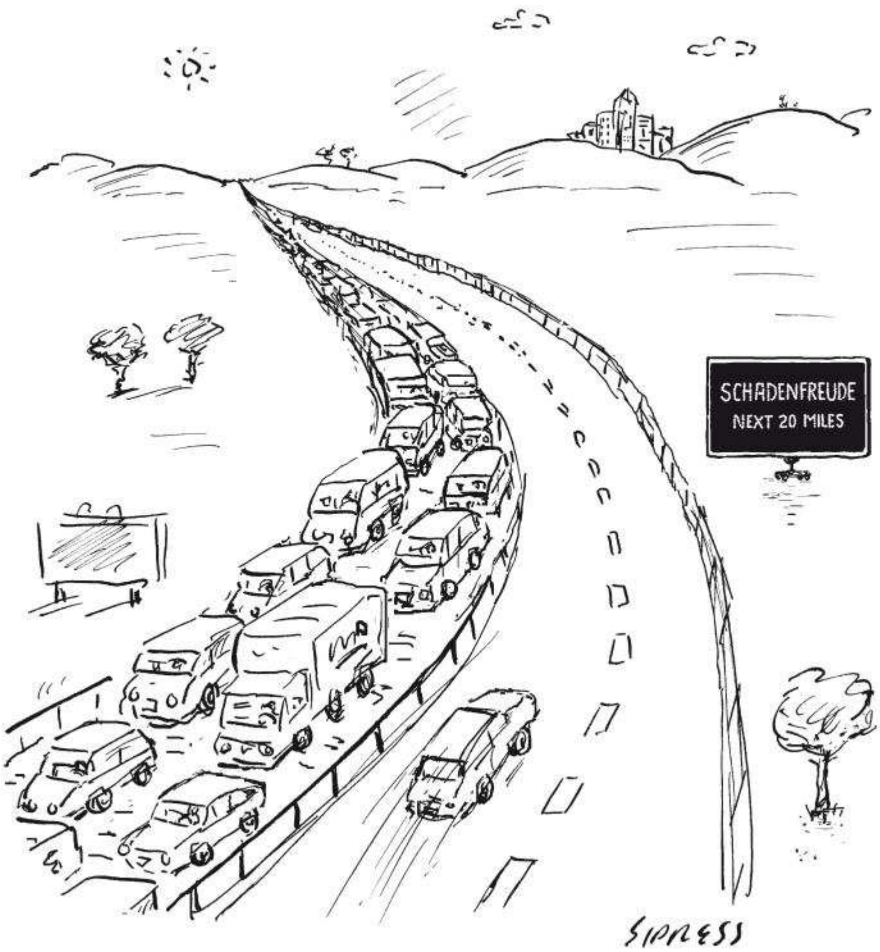
"Cancel it," Barry said. "I'm feeling better than ever. Just low blood sugar is all. Hey, seriously. You're a peach of a guy. Where's your better half?"

"Still looking for that perfect girl, I'm afraid."

"And you decorated this place *yourself*?"

"Guilty as charged. Come, let me make you a Corpse Reviver." They walked to an area flanked by a shelf of Cîroc bottles denoting general recreation. Jeff Park poured a glass of fizzy German mineral water. "You've got to hydrate," he ordered. "I want to see you finish this H_2O before you hit the hard stuff."

Jeff Park's Corpse Reviver was, as the name promised, a ridiculously potent blend of cognac, Calvados, and vermouth, served in a Martini glass. "Jesus,"



• •

Barry said, as he finished his drink. Some vague memories of downtown bars returned: Jeff Park could hold his own with the alcohol.

"So, what's up, Barry?" Jeff Park said. "Just passing through? Decided to look me up?" He had brought out a bottle of twenty-year Yamazaki and was serving it straight up, quite decadent for 1:27 P.M. What the hell did Jeff Park do for a living? He had cashed out of This Side of Capital with zero.

"All of this is going to sound crazy," Barry said.

"Uh-huh."

"I'm on a journey. A journey by bus." Barry knew that he would eventually have to explain his flight from This Side of Capital to people in his bracket. He knew that news of his "meltdown" would immediately form the latest bulletin in the incestuous, bloodthirsty world from which he had sprung. But he doubted that it would really surprise anyone. The people in his world could be nuts. The world's largest hedge fund, Bridgewater, of Westport, Connecticut, was essentially a cult, with its own bible, ritual mind control, and feats of strength. A fellow at another fund, a quant billionaire-in-training, played piano at a third-rate bar while passing around a tip jar. Like your first ankle monitor or your fourth divorce, the occasional break with reality was an important part of any hedge-fund titan's biography.

"The things I've seen," Barry said, and he told Jeff Park a few of his adventures so far.

Jeff Park seemed interested. He poured more drinks, although he insisted that Barry chase his with water. "It sounds a little bit like you're doing a version of 'On the Road,'" Park said.

"That's exactly right!" Barry shouted. "That's exactly what *I* thought." No wonder he had picked Jeff Park to host him—the man had literary sensibilities beyond those of his colleagues. They really did a good job of educating up at Cornell.

"I used to take the Greyhound to visit my uncle's family in Savannah," Jeff Park said. "Everyone there looked at us like we were freaks."

"Everyone looks at *me* like *I'm* a freak!"

"You kind of are a freak, Barry."

Barry took that as the highest of compliments. He was bonding with this former employee. They were going to be friends. "Are you from around here originally?"

"Yeah. I moved back down to take care of my parents."

"Your parents are, I want to say, from China?"

"Close enough."

"My wife is Indian."

"Rock."

"You ought to get married!" Barry said, completely forgetting that his own marriage was only a team of seven lawyers short of kaput, to borrow his father's favorite word. Maybe this nice Jeff Park couldn't find a woman to marry away from New York. He had given up on finding a partner in order to take care of his parents. Immigrants. Barry wanted to tell him that his own mother had died when he was five, but they weren't there yet. He eyed his glass of Yamazaki as Atlanta blazed cruel beyond the tinted floor-to-ceiling windows. His instinct to help Jeff Park was overwhelming. He remembered Seema's friend, the Asian woman from Brooklyn. Tina? Lena? "I threw away my cell phone," Barry said.

"Now, *that's* amazing," Jeff Park said.

"Can I check something on your computer?"

A laptop was provided. The world of the Internet was so far away from who he was at this point. Still, he brought up Seema's profile. No new posts in forever. Seema was not an avid social-media person, a thing he loved about her. "Is that your wife and kid?" Jeff Park asked.

The profile photo in the corner of the screen was of Seema with her arms almost around Shiva, behind them the neo-Georgian shell of the six-thousand-square-foot Rhinebeck house in progress. Shiva was looking away, but in a super-intelligent way, which made the whole thing look like a portrait in normalcy, maybe precocity, and, anyway, Seema's best Bollywood smile lit up the landscape better than any sun. Her cleavage was open and ready and golden.

"What a gorgeous family you have,"

Jeff Park said. "When I worked for you, I think you were just about to get married. That kid. Those eyes."

"Yes," Barry said, his hand frozen over the keyboard. A "Sesame Street" song started playing in his head. "*C" is for cookie, that's good enough for me*. "But here's what I wanted to show you," he said. He scrolled through the list of Seema's friends.

"Now, this girl is *spunky*," Barry said. "She called me a tool to my face! And I think she's pretty intellectual, like you. Oh, one night, in Brooklyn, she made these great Chinese dumplings for us. I bet your folks would love her."

"Mina Kim," Jeff Park read off the screen. "Not really up my alley."

Barry was heartbroken. "But she's Chinese!"

Jeff Park stared at him. "I'm more into the Southern-belle type," he finally said.

"Oh." Barry sighed.

"But thanks for looking out for me. You're like that woman from 'Fiddler on the Roof.'"

Barry sort of knew what he was talking about. *Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match*. Jeff Park had a wide cultural reach. "Well, I'm going to make it my mission to get you married," he said. "Nice guy like you."

"I'm not averse to the ladies," Jeff Park said. "I've designed this place with them in mind."

"How so?"

Jeff Park took him on a tour, starting with a massive glass-topped dining table. "You see these lights?" he said, pointing out a trio of Sputnik-style globes hanging over the mirrored surface. "The average girl I date is five foot six, or an inch taller than the national average. I have a spreadsheet that lists the attributes of each girl I've ever dated. It's super granular. So if I'm making her dinner, and she's standing here, waiting for me, talking to me, maybe having a drink, the light from these lamps is directly level with her eyes. She can see better, and I can enjoy her glow."

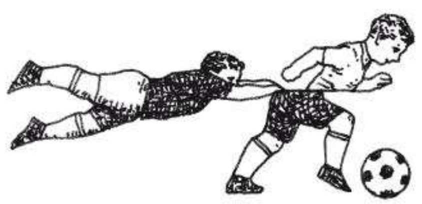
Barry was impressed by Park's thoughtfulness. A spreadsheet. The rap on guys in finance was all wrong. They cared *too* much. He knew he did. If you looked at it a certain way, he had abandoned his family because he didn't have the emotional bandwidth to accommodate their special needs. He examined a frigate-size couch. "This sofa is the perfect height for a five-foot-six woman," Jeff Park said. "When she sits down, the sofa waterfalls at the back of her knees." He invited Barry to sit down. "You see, there's a gap of at least three inches between the back of your knee and the couch, because you're tall. But if you were a five-foot-six woman, you'd be completely snug."

"So you only date women of that height?" Barry asked.

"Well, there's some variance," Jeff Park said. "Maybe half a sigma. I don't want the tail wagging the dog. But, yeah, mostly."

"You're a romantic," Barry said. Jeff Park shrugged, blushing. He was not unhandsome; his face was chiselled and tanned to a dusky perfection. The black athletic gear made him look like a glossy seal in human form. Only the Rolex Sky-Dweller on his wrist did not appeal to Barry's taste.

Upstairs, Park had an airy office with a full view of the awful Coca-Cola tower. Barry felt a twinge of passion at the sight of a Bloomberg up and running. Jeff Park had only one screen going, which was cute. On a glass board, he had sketched out some trades that appeared exceptionally long-term and cautious, making some kind of play around Alcoa and Dow. Just scanning the numbers on the board, Barry assumed an A.U.M. of thirty-five million, which in the best of worlds brought in, what, a couple of million a year? He probably had a net of ten to fifteen. And he could live on it. And be happy. And buy couches that waterfalled the legs of near-median women.



"I trade maybe two hours in the morning, and then I spend the rest of the day working on myself," Jeff Park said as they passed a formidable wall of books, most of them new and clearly not bought by the yard. "I read at least a hundred books a year, and if I'm at, let's say, seventy by November, I'll take the rest of the year off from work to catch up. I like reading books to the girls I date—Beckett plays, Chekhov stories, Shakespeare sonnets. Believe me, they need it around these parts."

"Wonderful, just wonderful," Barry said. "This is what I'm talking about. Real self-improvement. A vocation and an avocation."

"So many guys say, 'I want to die at my peak net worth,' but not me."

"Clearly not."

Jeff now led him into a bathroom. They were looking at the double mirrors that functioned as TVs in the rain-shower tub. The G.O.P. Convention in Cleveland was in full blaze. Ted Cruz was saying he would not be voting for Hillary, but he wasn't going to endorse Trump, either. "I used to stay at the Trump hotel on Columbus Circle whenever I visited New York," Jeff Park said. "Never again."

"I'm a moderate Republican," Barry said. "Socially liberal."

They went downstairs for a new course of drinks. Jeff Park was making them with ruby-red vodka and Seagram's soda now. They sat at a table made from the cross-section of a giant tree. Its height was also designed to seduce an almost average woman. Barry felt around the serrated bark of the edges. He liked furniture that was slightly rustic with hints of the Arts and Crafts movement; that was supposed to be the motif of the Rhinebeck house, if he ever finished it. "Who made this?" Barry asked. The vodka-and-soda combination was delicious.

"It's a Japanese eucalyptus," Jeff Park said. "I bought it in Kokura. It reminds me of how lucky I am."

"Kokura?"

"You never heard of 'the luck of Kokura'? August 9, 1945. An American bomber was headed to bomb Kokura, in the south of Japan. But there was too much cloud cover over the city that day. So the plane was diverted. To Nagasaki."

"Wow. Lucky for sure."

"Right. Luck. If I had been born in Bangladesh to a family of ragpickers, would any of this happen?" He swept his arm around his forty-five hundred square feet of property. "My mother worked as a maid in Buckhead when they got here. I still remember the food stamps with the drawing of the old

whiteys signing the Declaration of Independence. I memorized the words on it. U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Coupon. Where else could a maid's son end up like this? That's why I'll always take care of my folks. Why I'll always live in the same town as them. I've got to honor the luck that was given me."

Barry thought of his own relationship with his parents. He had not had the opportunity to take care of his mother, of course, but he thought he had been kind enough to his father, given everything. After he had secured his first billion under management, he had bought out his father's pool-cleaning company, Malibu Pools, for four million dollars, about ten times what it was worth, so that his dad could finally retire. But after that gesture, and after his father's openly racist behavior at his and Seema's wedding, he'd mostly avoided the old man. He had gone out just once to La Jolla, California, where his father was living with his girlfriend, Neta, whom he had found on an online Zionist forum. "I'm so sorry about your son getting autism," Neta had said. "Did you give him vaccines? I'm sure that's what did it." "I told him not to get the vaccines!" his father had hollered from his perch beneath a plum tree. "I sent him the link about how the Somalian Muslims were spreading it through their doctors in Minnesota." Barry was out of there in less than thirty-six hours. Five months later, his father was dead of pancreatic cancer.

Maybe Jeff Park was just a better son. And maybe better sons made for better people, and that was why their mothers didn't die in car accidents, their faces caked in blood.

"But that's not luck," Barry said, returning to the theme of the conversation. "Sure, it's helpful not to be born to ragpickers, but mostly your success was a result of your own hard work. And your parents' gumption to move here."

"You don't consider yourself lucky?"

"Not for a minute," Barry said.

"You found yourself working in the right industry at the right time. No regulation. All the leverage you could eat from the banks. I'm not even going to mention the insider trading that's just part of being in the old boys' club."

"I don't *think* we're under investigation," Barry said, which was to say that the F.B.I. hadn't bashed in their door yet. Jeff Park looked at him. What could he know?

"Hey, I'm not knocking what we do," Jeff Park said. "It takes smarts. But so much of it is luck. You execute one good trade, and people will listen to everything you say for the next five years."

"All I know is I never had any advantages," Barry said. "I wasn't even lucky enough to be born to immigrant parents."

Jeff Park laughed. "Now *that's* funny." They clinked glasses.

Barry was sprawled on the guest-room bed, the room spinning around him. He had found someone to talk to. The days without Seema's chatter had taken their toll, but now he had a friend again, and a friend who wouldn't talk about Shiva's diagnosis 24/7. He took off his Georgia Aquarium whale-shark T-shirt and wondered if Jeff Park himself had changed him out of his Vineyard Vines. The intimacy would be a little shocking, but it pleased Barry nonetheless. He was fine with his body.

The whole thing about luck made him wonder, though. Barry considered himself entirely self-made. His father hadn't collected food stamps like Jeff Park's parents, but he used to get all his towels cheap from a source at an upstate prison. Every raggedy towel Barry ever knew as an adolescent had been stamped with the legend "Hudson Correctional Facility." It took three towels to dry off after a shower. Frugality was the motto of the two Cohen men and the depressed sheepdog in their red brick semidetached duplex on Little Neck Parkway, with its plastic chairs on the little green island of front yard and its thick security gates for the robbers who would never come. His father's business servicing Nassau County pools was seasonal, and he could never squirrel away enough for the winter. Barry's first crush must have been the blond mermaid on the Chicken of the Sea tuna cans his father bought at Waldbaum's, four for a dollar.

Not that Jeff Park had had great luck in life, either. Just six months into his tenure at This Side of Capital, probably a year shy of turning thirty, he had omitted a minus sign in an Excel spreadsheet and turned negative margins positive and a clear sell into a screaming buy. The trade was losing thirty million a day, and by the time he discovered the error it was down a hundred and fifty million. A simple error had cost the fund close to ten per cent of A.U.M. Barry hadn't been there for the actual moment, but he'd heard that when Jeff Park had realized what was happening, he passed out, smashing his head right into a Starbucks on his desk. He'd had to be taken to the hospital with light burns and a moderate concussion. The hit to his reputation was even worse, and rumors soon spread that he was selling real estate down in Florida. Beyond the actual loss of money, it was a sad story, although it cracked some people up. Akash Singh wasn't one of them. He said he had never expected such negligence from an Asian. And now Barry was lying around in Jeff Park's guest bed in his underwear.

There was a knock on the door. "Yeah!" Barry shouted. "What's up?" Jeff Park wanted him to know that they'd leave for dinner at seven. "Can't wait!" Barry shouted back, and he meant it.

Hotlanta, as some Atlantans unironically called it, was pretty incredible. They tooled around in Jeff Park's Ferrari California—simple, working-class people on street corners calling out their love for the car, or whistling at it as Manhattan construction workers would at a curvy woman. "*Uh-huh*," they said, thrusting their hips. The Ferrari felt a bit much, as though Jeff Park hadn't got the 0.1 Percenter's Memo about experiences, not objects, being the shit, but then again Barry collected watches, so who was he to talk? Over time, the ceramic brakes on Jeff Park's Ferrari had started failing from the lack of excessive speed, and the only solution, Park said his dealer had told him, was to go at least eighty miles per hour on an off-ramp and then brake like crazy. The thrust of speed and then its abrupt demise thrilled Barry. "This is like astronaut training," he said.

They were driving around hipster neighborhoods, passing acre upon acre of Craftsman bungalows, some perched on little hills, others flush with the sidewalk, all with some kind of colorful expression of their owner's taste—an appliqué of a butterfly on the front porch or the hulk of some magnificent seventies vehicle idling by the curb in a state

of tasteful neglect. Jeff Park explained that this neighborhood was called the Old Fourth Ward and that the music they were listening to was by OutKast. Until his Greyhound trip, Barry had mostly heard this kind of music at his buddies' daughters' five-hundred-thousand-dollar bat mitzvahs at the Mandarin. "This is fun," he said.

The restaurant they went to for dinner was outfitted with a bunch of hunting trophies along the walls, deer mostly, but also a cow, and something that might have been an impala. "I like Hemingway," Barry said. "One of my life goals is to learn to hunt like him." There were jars of pickled stuff, too—okra and string beans.

"So I've developed a spreadsheet on the best restaurants in Atlanta, and this place is No. 17," Jeff Park said. For someone whose career had almost been done in by a spreadsheet, Jeff Park certainly set store by them. Maybe this was his attempt at Excel redemption. "The food is great, but I had to take off points for the service," he said.

"I've been on the Greyhound for days," Barry said. "I've survived on pork rinds and off-brand coffee."

"It's like you're suffering for all of us," Jeff Park said. Barry wondered whether many Chinese people were Christians.

The food—salad garnished with buttermilk dressing; bacon and potato; catfish sausage with fermented lemon—practically gleamed on the tableware, and tasted both Southern and progressive. He couldn't have been happier. They had ordered the most expensive wine on the menu, a hundred-and-thirty-six-dollar blend of Grenache and Syrah from God knows where, which both of them deemed acceptable, if a little aggressive. Barry wanted a second bottle, but he knew that he had to pay for the meal, and his six hundred dollars wouldn't go far. The bill came to three hundred, or half Barry's new net worth.

"This place is moving up two spots on my spreadsheet," Jeff Park said. "Although, maybe it's just the company." He smiled at Barry.

Barry could feel himself blushing. In Arab countries, you were allowed to hold a male friend's hand. He had learned that from one of his investors, Qatari Ahmed, during a very long and confusing night of drinking at the St. Regis.



"Let's put on more of that OutKast music," he said, when they got back in the Ferrari. "It's very smart."

They drove to a mall in a former industrial building called Ponce City Market, which was like the Chelsea Market in New York, only it was in Atlanta. They climbed up the elevated tracks to a new park called the BeltLine, which was just like the High Line in New York, only it was also in Atlanta. As they started down the rail bed, two women with thick Southern accents asked Jeff Park to take a photograph of them with their phone. He said that he would be "dee-*light*-ed," his own accent reverting to what it must have been before Cornell sanded off the edges. The women wore very little and were almost beautiful. One of them, a tall blonde, had a cast on her leg, which was attractive for reasons Barry couldn't fathom; the other one was younger and had a goofy smile.

"Now, the one with the cast, she's a classic example of the Southern belle," Jeff Park said after the women had moved on.

"That's your type!" Barry said. "Should we go back after them? You could offer them a ride in your car. They would love that."

Jeff Park shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "Probably not." The sun was setting and the humidity was unpleasant, but Barry wanted to walk deeply into the night. There were trees and grass all around them, and sometimes a clump of skyline would come into view. Barry had counted at least three skylines in Atlanta already.

"So," Jeff Park said, "a part of me has to ask. And I know this may not be your favorite topic."

"Ask away," Barry said.

"What the hell happened with Valupro?"

"Oh," Barry said. "*That*."

Valupro, R.I.P., was a pharmaceutical company that Barry had fallen in love with many years ago; in fact, right after Jeff Park was canned. He wasn't the only one, of course—half the hedgies he knew had gone nuts for it—but Barry's erection was more pointed than the others', and it entailed, at one point, about half his book. Valupro had promised value—or, per its name, "valu"—but not to its customers, who would see their pharmacy bills explode if they happened to be ill with some exotic but deadly disease of the tailbone or pudenda. No, the company promised mad

valu to its shareholders, and the phrase "shareholder value" was Barry's favorite.

"We are a nation of shareholders," he had said more than once to Seema, while trying to articulate his brand of no-nonsense but compassionate capitalism. Several times during his Greyhound trip, Barry had paused to consider that, although he loved his fellow-passengers deeply, he could not trust them at the voting booth, because they were not shareholders. They did not understand the thrill and the pain and the *obligation* of owning a part of their country.

In any case, Valupro was run by a charming alcoholic nebbish named Sammy Yontif. Yontif wore triple-thick glasses and not so much cargo shorts as cargo pants and cargo shirts, the better to hide his pouches of fat. He twitched a lot and came across as the bad-breath chemistry teacher you sort of had to love back in high school if you were at all generous with your teen-age heart. "You're a smart guy," Sammy Yontif had mouth-breathed the first time he met Barry. "You know value." Barry hadn't been called smart since high school. He was intrigued and wanted to hear about Valupro's business model. "Here's our business model," Yontif said. "Fuck R. & D. Fuck it. We're not going to cure cancer, we're not going to save the world. We're going to deliver value to investors like you."

Delivering value meant buying foreign drug companies for cheap and then using them for tax-inversion purposes. Barry loved this part. His hatred of our nation's tax regime was absolute. Why not pay taxes in Ireland instead? Or why pay taxes at all? He adored how little Yontif cared about appearances, this fat, fiery Rutgers-graduated nebbish in a cargo shirt who would probably have been forced to hang himself at Princeton. Barry and Seema and Yontif and Yontif's sumptuous Seema-grade Croatian girlfriend had whiled away three days together on a yacht off the coast of Sardinia. The nebbish and the Croat spent their time drinking caseloads of prosecco and amiably throwing up starboard. Seema, pregnant with Shiva, was not amused, and at one point demanded that a helicopter evacuate her from the carnage. "This is a business of relationships," Barry kept whispering to her.

Valupro's value rocketed through the rest of the summer. Qatari Ahmed, Barry's chief investor, looked ready to give him a serious B.J. And then it all went to shit. Someone squealed. Most of the profits had come from buying other companies and then using every accounting method known to man. The media and the politicians pounced on the way that Valupro had hiked up prices on some life-saving diuretic or whatnot, and the next thing Barry knew his fiery nebbish friend had checked into rehab with a fifteen-million-dollar severance package. Barry wanted to stand by his friend, this guy who had accomplished so much with, socially speaking, so little. He held tight to his position and a month later the stock had plunged from five hundred to fifty. Another month later, there was no stock.

"I would never trade Valupro," Jeff Park said. "There was a lot of hair on that company. In fact, to be honest, I shorted it."

"Oh," Barry said. "I thought all your trades were long-term."

"I couldn't help myself. That was low-hanging fruit. It was the opposite of value investing."

"Don't get all Warren Buffet on me," Barry said.

The men walked along in silence. They were in a densely forested part of the BeltLine where the sounds and circumstances of city life were few, and for a second Barry felt they had left humanity entirely. "Can I offer you just one piece of advice?" Barry said. "As an older person?" He knew the Chinese revered their elders. Wasn't that why Jeff Park had moved down to this semi-suburban city to be with his parents? "You can get a better watch than a Rolex. That's not the image someone as smart as you wants to project."

Jeff Park laughed. "Ouch," he said. "I guess I struck a nerve with Valupro. I'm sorry, man."

"You know what a Veblen good is?" Barry asked.

"Sure."

That was too bad, as Barry longed to explain it to him. Why was it so hard to mentor this slender younger man? "All I'm saying is that you should be projecting your taste to others of your stature. Not to a Southern belle in a leg cast."

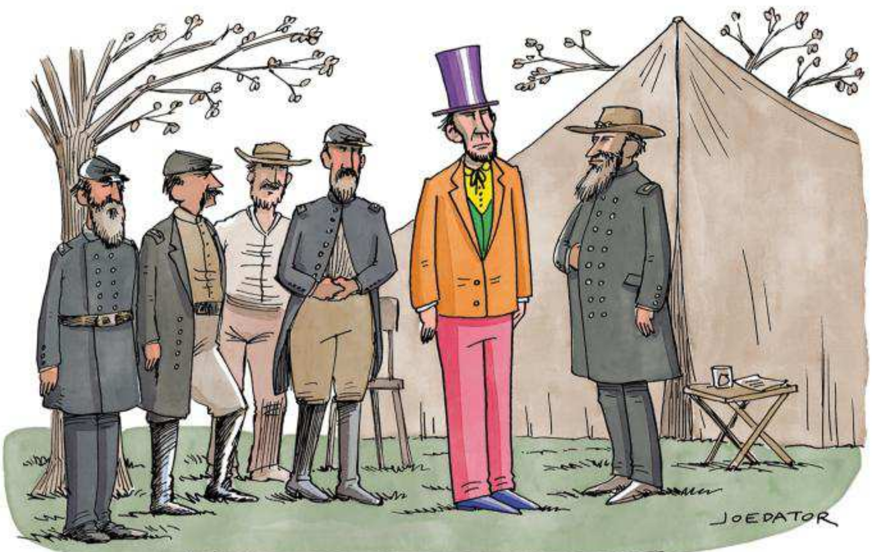
"What's on *your* wrist?" Jeff Park asked.

"This is an F.P. Journe Octa Automatique Lune. Journe makes nine hundred watches a year. Rolex makes close to a million."

Jeff Park held Barry's hand by the wrist and examined the watch. His hand was warm and dry, just like Seema's. "I like how the yellow-gold hour and minute dials are lost in all the negative space around them," he said. "That's very cool."

"Thanks," Barry said. He smiled. "You have very promising aesthetics."

"But the Southern belles we just saw, they would know exactly what a Rolex is. But they would have no idea about your



VERY RARE COLOR PHOTO OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

watch. They might even think you bought it at the airport. A Rolex of this size and weight merely announces the scale of my ambitions. I want to represent my value."

"But you must also own a Patek. You get their magazine."

"I got a 1518 perpetual in rose gold."

"Wow." Barry sighed. That rare watch was probably worth as much as Jeff Park's Hotlanta apartment. He wanted to feel good for this young man who was helping him out so much, just when he needed it. Instead, he felt envious. No angry wife, no autistic child, no possible subpoena, no Wells notice on the horizon—just two good cars, a seven-figure watch, and time to read as many books as he pleased.

"I have a different takeaway from that Valupro story," Jeff Park said. They were circling back to the former industrial building that now served as a mall. "You tried to make a friend, and that friend turned out to be a bad person. And when he fell, you stood by him."

"Yeah, but that's the kind of life lesson I should have learned by high school," Barry said.

"Believe me, you're not as stunted as some of the other people I've met over the years."

"Thank you," Barry said. "I appreciate that." The Ferrari was parked in a special V.I.P. zone, and now a young man ran to retrieve it. "Do you want to try that 1518 on for me tomorrow?" Barry asked. "I'd love to see it in the metal."

Several happy days ensued. Barry enjoyed sharing his timepieces with Jeff Park, and the Patek 1518 in rose gold was indeed sumptuous. The date and month were in French, and the moon phase glowed so brightly it looked like the first drawing executed by a perfect child. Jeff Park also kept a watch log in the form of an Excel spreadsheet, and he and Barry spent a morning poring over each other's results.

Barry wanted to stay at Jeff Park's just a little shy of forever. But it was a question of money. One more meal like the three-hundred-dollar one they had had would ruin him. He looked up some of This Side of Capital's positions on the Bloomberg. It was a massacre. How much of a dent would this shit make in his own net worth? Dudes who were about to belly flop often signed everything over to their wives, but he couldn't do that if he was going to divorce his.

Jeff Park had lent him his other car, which was a Bentley, informing him that the rich interior leather had cost the lives of six cows. The whole thing smelled like a feedlot, and the worst of it was that it did maybe nine miles to the gallon, so that Barry had to shell out forty bucks at a Sunoco. Thank God for cheap gas. On the other hand, wherever he parked in Atlanta, a young man would run out and say something complimentary about the car before slotting it in the V.I.P. section right out front.

He wondered what it would take to become Jeff Park's mentor again. He would sometimes get out his Patek 570 and trace the LEADER OF MEN engraving with his fingertip. Maybe some of the guys at This Side of Capital did still believe in him, despite the Valupro fiasco. He had come of age with them at Goldman, then plucked them off to form a team at Joey Goldblatt's Icarus Capital, years before he spun off This Side of Capital. They would eat together, go to the gym together, vacation together, and also indulge their carnal sides together.

At Icarus, Joey Goldblatt used to keep a map of Manhattan with all the rub-and-tug joints clearly marked. The guys did a lot of business over at Flash Dancers, and Barry was not immune to the delights of a truly dirty lap dance. He was single back then, after all. But he dreaded the rub-and-tug joints. There was one night in particular when he found himself with his team in Oriental Touch or Seoul Cycle. The dinginess of the place shattered him. There was a decoration of some kind of Asian bird, a crane stencilled cheaply over a body of water, and a Korean Air calendar. The airline calendar was especially depressing, because it made him think that these girls really wanted to go home to their families. He didn't remember the face of the woman he was assigned—she was mostly eye makeup—but he couldn't have a physical encounter with her. Instead, they lay on a bunch of towels on a mattress in their underwear looking out onto an airshaft. They talked about art history, which the woman had been studying at one of Seoul's lesser universities. She made it clear that if you weren't "on the A-team" in Korea you ended up here. She asked him which part of finance he worked in. She got a lot of guys from the European banks. She advised him to collect the works of Yayoi Kusama, a Japanese artist Joey Goldblatt was, oddly enough, wild about. He must have gone there a lot.

The allotted sixty minutes expired chastely. It was painfully clear how much this woman didn't want to have sex with him. This just wasn't how he pictured free markets. He tried not to hear his boys climaxing in the neighboring rooms, especially Akash Singh, who was very, very loud. The next day, he gathered his team and told them he didn't think that going to these kinds of places was good for them. They were going to conquer the world! One day, they'd each have A.U.M.s of more than ten billion. They didn't need dirty brothels. His boys were mostly a bunch of lax bros from Duke and Cornell, with a smattering of friendly Princeton overlords-in-training and two Indians from Caltech. He was, at best, five years their senior, but that counted for a lot when you were as young as they were. The boys heeded his call, and many began to explore the world of artisanal hookers and the burgeoning new pay-for-play field of online "sugar daddies."

Over the years, Barry took his capacity as a moralizer seriously, steering his boys away from paid girlfriends and into the worlds of watch collecting and moderate Republican politics. He encouraged them to date ladies from good women's colleges and acted as something of a matchmaker, even as his own bed lay cold. By the time he formed This Side of Capital, all the boys were married, except for the incorrigible Akash Singh. On the first anniversary of the launch of his hedge fund, a week after the Qatar Investment Authority signed on and their A.U.M. topped two billion, the boys all came together to give him the classy Patek Calatrava with the engraving he now saw before him. Until Shiva was born, it was the proudest day of his life.

"It would be funny to just go to Buckhead," Jeff Park said on the night that Trump was scheduled to speak at the Convention. "See the rich crackers. Get jiggy with the G.O.P."

They drove around Buckhead in

the Ferrari California listening to OutKast's "I'm sorry, Ms. Jackson" song. On a busy avenue, they parked in front of the Beer Curve, where there was a sign prohibiting hoods, baggy clothes, and "pants below the waist." "Looks racist enough," Jeff Park said. Barry laughed, feeling high on the complicity. Could he have imagined doing something like this just last week, when he was still the chief desk jockey at his office?

The bar was kind of a dive, and, per the prohibitions outside, entirely white. There were white men of all ages here, some dressed in pink shirts like private-equity guys, others in baseball caps and lumpy denim jeans or Dickies. Some had brought their women, who all looked like the same woman, highlighted and nondescript. "Here's to diversity," Jeff Park said, and they clinked Miller Lites. Barry throttled his down. *I'm drinking a Miller Lite!*

The barmaid was in her twenties, and she was gorgeous in a way that suggested maybe she hadn't been fully apprised of just how gorgeous she was. She had eyes darker than the delicious Maker's Mark chocolates Barry had found in Jeff Park's fridge, and her skin was as olive as Barry's. "So who are you voting for?" Jeff Park asked her, his shiny Rolex Sky-Dweller lighting up a patch of bar around him.

The barmaid opened her gorgeous mouth. Barry thought he knew what her answer would be. But he was wrong. "I despise Hillary Clinton," she said. "I just don't trust her."

"But, come on!" Jeff Park said. "Trump?"

"Socially I'm a bit more liberal," she said. "But Trump's going to rebuild the economy to where it should be. The condos around here aren't being built fast enough under Obama."

Barry thought that was an odd thing to say. It wasn't like she was going to Emory or anything. She was a bartender at a lousy bar. Barry was as trickle-down as any guy, but what did the building of Buckhead condos have to do with her lot in life?

A filthy old homeless guy walked into the bar and said something in Spanish to the barmaid. He gave her a pair of sunglasses he had apparently found in the parking lot. "You want water or a Coke?" she asked him.

"Coke," he rasped, and then made a smoking motion with his hand. She produced a handful of cigarettes. He stood there for a good five minutes savoring his free Coke, each sip punctuated by a burp that made his eyeballs tremble, then lit up a cigarette with a wet book of matches that took another five minutes to spark.

"That was very nice of you," Jeff Park said to the barmaid.

"Eduardo comes in here all the time," she said. "He used to sweep up all the bars in Buckhead and people took care of him. Now it's just me."

"See," Barry said to Jeff Park, "this is the thing about America. You can never guess who's going to turn out to be a nice person."

They asked if there was anything to eat, and the barmaid gave them a Domino's pizza menu. "You got to try the Philly-cheese-steak pizza," she said. "I could eat it every night."

Most of the young people in the bar were talking about sports and their own bygone athleticism, but then a trio of pink shirts came in from the heat and clustered around Barry and Jeff Park. "Can you believe this election?" Jeff Park asked them. He wasn't shy in talking to people at all. Did that come naturally or had he spent his childhood practicing his friend moves? A

SON IN AUGUST

Dignity, I said to myself
as he carried his last things into the dorm.
It was not a long goodbye,

nothing sad in it,
all I had to do was turn
and head up the hill.

All I had to do was balance
on two feet that seemed to belong
to a marionette who had no idea

what came next or who governed the strings.
There's no emergency, I told her,
just get back to your car,

that's it, that's all that's required.
I didn't mind accompanying her,
I myself had nowhere to go.

She drove east then farther east
under a river through a tunnel
until she found herself back at home,

with a purpose.
And the purpose was?
To recognize the green awning.

To find a key in a pocket.
To fit that key in the lock,
take off her shoes, drop them on the floor

with others left there like old coins
from a place she must have visited.
Worth something but what.

There were no clues in the medicine cabinet,
none in the cupboard, none in the freezer
where she found old licorice and Bit-O-Honey

shoved next to a ziplock of bluish breast milk,
all of it frozen solid over nineteen years
into some work of art, a sculpture,

an archaic something of something.
She looked at my hands reaching into the freezer.
Or I looked at hers.

They were strong, worn, spackled with age
as they removed the milk-ice
stashed like weed far in the back.

Do they even make this stuff anymore?
What's it good for?
What was it ever good for?

Repurposed, she thought,
isn't that the word the kids keep saying
these days? Hey sweetie,

she called to the unoccupied room,
hey love. It was so hot the air
from the freezer turned to steam

and she took the ice into her own hands,
held it, held it gently against the back
of my warm animal neck

until something began to melt and I was alone.

—*Catherine Barnett*

Chinese dude in the South. It must have been hard.

"Trump's going to win by a landslide," the leader of the pink shirts said. He was the kind of guy Barry had gone to college with, only Georgian. "Everyone knows Hillary's a liar. The folks up in Ohio and Pennsylvania, they sure know."

"I agree completely," Barry said. "Lower taxes and less regulation, that's my middle name. I've voted only Republican since I was eighteen. I think Obama's been a nightmare for this country. But I'm from New York, and, honestly, Trump scares me."

As soon as Barry had said the last sentence, the pink shirts turned around in unison and left the bar. They just walked right out of the place without a word. "Nice going," Jeff Park said. "You scared away the Trump Youth."

"I've never had people walk out on me," Barry said. "They say I'm the friendliest guy on the Street."

"Maybe don't announce that you're from New York and scared of Trump all in one go." Jeff Park looked flirtatiously at the barmaid, who slapped them with two more Miller Lites. The Domino's Philly-cheese-steak pizza arrived via a gray-haired black gentleman who had difficulty breathing. Barry dug into it with the same insatiable hunger he now brought to the rest of his life. His mouth these days was mostly about salt.

Trump came on the screen. "I humbly and gratefully accept," he said. A bunch of college-age Republican boy hipsters had gathered around Barry and Jeff Park to cheer on their nominee. They all had thick beards and were going bald. Barry was scared to say anything, lest they, too, walked out on him. "I'm not voting for Hillary," one of them said to Jeff Park, who was gently teasing their opinions out of them. "It has nothing to do with her being a woman, it's that she's proven she can't run the country."

"That sounds like it has *a lot* to do with her being a woman," Jeff Park said.

When Trump mentioned his support of "our greatest ally in the region, the State of Israel," the most bearded of the Trump boys said, sarcastically, "Well, *that* just got you some votes," and the rest of his cohort laughed. Who were these people, Barry wondered. These barmaids who gave free Cokes to itinerant Mexicans but wanted to vote for a man who would make fun of his disabled Indian son?

The convention ended and the hipster Trump supporters left to "turn it up a notch" elsewhere. Barry drank, feeling sad. The bar was now filled with guys in cargo shirts holding their beers at weird angles and girls in Daisy Dukes. A giant roach crawled by. This part of Buckhead was somehow at once wealthy and down at the heels. The band looked like the two hairy white guys from ZZ Top. They were singing a rocked-out version of "Ms. Jackson." "First Melania cribs Michelle Obama's speech," Jeff Park said, "now this."

Once again, Barry felt a generalized boredom around him, the boredom of a martial country without a proper war. Wasn't that what Trump was promising his followers? An all-out conflict of their own choosing?

"I'm depressed," Barry admitted.

"Let's go back to my place and get some drink on," Jeff Park said.

They walked out into the night, which smelled of pizza and gasoline. When they got to the Ferrari, a drunken bro in a backward cap stumbled up to them. "I'll give you forty dollars for a spin around the block," he said to Jeff Park. His Southern-belle girlfriend

made pigeonlike noises behind him.

The guy actually took out two twenties. Jeff Park smiled sadly and shook his head. "I don't need it," he said.

"I can see that," the drunk bro said, nodding at the Ferrari.

Barry and Jeff Park revved off toward midtown. Jeff Park was silent. "You O.K.?" Barry asked.

"That guy didn't even care about ogling my car in front of his girlfriend. I wasn't a threat to him, because I'm an Asian man."

It took a while for Barry to unpack that statement.

"In this town, you're either black or you're white," Jeff Park said.

Barry said some positive things about the inherent masculinity of Jeff Park and his automobile. He didn't get a response for a while. "The top on this thing used to go down in fourteen seconds," Jeff Park finally said, "but now it takes eighteen. Everything's a scam."

Barry burped some Domino's and beer and then reached over and put his hand on Jeff Park's shoulder. He wanted to add, "It's going to be O.K.," but decided to let the gesture speak for itself. Jeff Park's shoulder moved unsubtly beneath his hand, the linen of his shirt slipping out of Barry's grasp. Barry should have tried to give a friendly athletic shoulder massage, just like his guys at the office used to do, partly for laughs and partly because it felt good, but now it was too late. They drove the rest of the way in silence.

Back in the apartment, Barry pulled out some glasses and whiskey at the alcohol station to make them both "something to wash out that Miller Lite taste."

"You go ahead," Jeff Park said. "I think I'm going to turn in for the night."

"You sure?"

"Gentex announces premarket. My biggest position. Been long all month."

In his bed, Barry breathed hard, sniffing up the sweet alcohol of the Yamazaki in front of him. Fuck it, fuck it, *fuck it*. What had he done? But maybe it wasn't the hand-on-shoulder gesture. Maybe it was the earlier stuff about the guy in the baseball cap trying to get a spin in his Ferrari for forty bucks. Barry kept reconstructing the time line over and over again. Ahmed had put his hand on his shoulder so many times. It really didn't mean anything. It really didn't. Nothing at all. He just liked being close to his friend.

It was early morning. Raining. The spires and crenellations of the midtown buildings had taken on a Gothic cast in the gloom. Barry carried his sorrow before him. "So I think it's time for me to shove off," he said. "It's time to get back on the Hound."

Jeff Park was eating nuts for breakfast and sipping on a macchiato. "O.K.," he said.

Barry sat himself up on the counter. "This is going to sound embarrassing," he said. Jeff Park audibly swallowed a nut. "I'm going to need a tiny bridge loan. I don't have access to my funds at the moment. Maybe two thousand."

"I can't do that, Barry," Jeff Park said.

That hurt Barry right away. "Why not? You've accommodated me for this long. This is just a loan."

"You're welcome to my house. Always. But I can't stake you."

"Who's talking 'stake'? Two thousand dollars. That's four per cent of the cost of your Sky-Dweller. I feel like I'm getting mixed signals from you."

Jeff Park looked down at his lap. "You fired me, Barry," he said.

Ah, so there it was, finally.

"It wasn't me," Barry said. "It was Akash Singh. Everything at that place happens because of fucking Akash Singh."

"You were there. You invited me out to breakfast at Casa Lever. And when I got there it was just you and the lawyer. What did the lawyer say? *I'm afraid we're going to have to part ways*."

"But that's how it's done. That's just—the legal way."

"You didn't say one word."

"I wasn't allowed to say one word."

"And I thought of you as something like a mentor almost."

Barry sighed. "I'm sorry," he said. "It was nothing personal. I wanted to be a mentor."

"I know," Jeff Park said. "I fucked up. I still have dreams about that Excel sheet. I'm not making excuses. And this is nothing personal, either. I like you, Barry." Their eyes locked, until Barry had to look away.

"I'm in genuine pain," Barry said. "So much of the time. Doesn't that deserve something?"

"Attention must be paid," Jeff Park said.

"What?"

" 'Death of a Salesman.' "

"Not right now," Barry said.

"I wish you had been straight with me," Jeff Park said.

"What do you mean?"

"You don't have any credit cards. You don't have a cell phone. You travel on a bus where you can pay for the tickets in cash. Is it that GastroLux trade? I mean, have you been subpoenaed? Did you get your Wells notice yet?"

"That's not why." Barry wanted to cry. "I didn't do anything wrong." He thought briefly, angrily, about that yacht off Sardinia. The nebbish. The fucking nebbish from Valupro. It all led back to him. But even if the nebbish had said something and then Barry's fund had traded on that "material nonpublic information," where was the proof? So many funds had shorted GastroLux. It was the most shortable stock ever.

"It's a witch hunt," Barry said. "They're after anyone who makes money. Anyone who has friends."

"I'm not blameless," Jeff Park said. "But I have my limits. And I know who I am."

"See," Barry said, "that's what I'm trying to find out on this journey."

"Sure," Jeff Park said. "And then when it's over you can tell people about it."

"I'm sorry?"

"You can tell them the story of how you once took a bus across the country. You can tell them about your 'journey.' "

The Bentley entered the exciting world of Atlanta's downtown. They passed Red Eye Bail Bonds and the Atlanta DUI Academy. A group of men had gathered outside the bus station. "Be careful," Jeff Park said. "This bus station has a bit of a reputation."

The men outside were whooping it up about the car. "Bentley!" they shouted.

"I hope you find your Southern belle," Barry said.

Jeff Park stuck out his hand and Barry shook it. "You're going to turn out better than me," Barry said. He grabbed his Rollaboard and got out of the car before Jeff Park could say goodbye. ♦

THE WRITER'S VOICE PODCAST
Gary Shteyngart reads "The Luck of Kokura."

THE CRITICS



BETTMANN/GETTY

Jamie Bernstein's memoir reckons with the secrets and successes of a man who was larger than life, at home and in public.

BOOKS

MUSIC MAN

Leonard Bernstein, as seen by his daughter—and by the rest of us.

BY DAVID DENBY

What happens if you are Cinderella and the prince turns out to be your father? Jamie Bernstein, Leonard Bernstein's firstborn daughter, has written a memoir of her family, a family that her overwhelming dad—loving, inspired, and sometimes insufferable—dominated for decades. The author grew up wriggling inside a paradox, struggling to become a self when so much of her was defined by her brilliant parent. "Famous Father Girl: A Memoir of Growing Up Bernstein" (HarperCollins) is unique among classical-music memoirs for its physical intimacy, its humor and tenderness, its ambivalence toward an irrepressible family genius. In the year of Leonard Bernstein's centenary, with its worldwide celebrations, this book is a startling inside view—not a corrective, exactly (Jamie rarely thought her dad less than great), but a story of encompassing family love, Jewish-American style, with all its glories and corrosions. No one lives easily on the slopes of a volcano; Jamie Bernstein has been faithful

to her unease. Truth-telling, rather than dignity, is her goal.

As a young man, Leonard Bernstein was prodigiously gifted and exceptionally handsome, and he slept with many men and with women, too. He seemed to be omnisexual, a man of unending appetite who worked and played all day and most of the night, with a motor that would not shut down until he was near collapse. Conducting, composing for the concert hall, composing for the theatre, playing the piano, teaching, writing about music, talking about it on television, suffering over everything he *wasn't* doing—he burned the candle from the middle out. From the nineteen-forties into the eighties, he was everywhere, an intellectual American Adonis, *our* genius—erudite, popular, media-wise, and unstoppably fluent. Many people long to be at the center of attention; Leonard Bernstein was actually good at the center—he routinely gave more than he received.

On the podium, he was so expressive that he embarrassed the fastidious, who thought there was something inappropriate (i.e., erotic) about his full-body conducting style. Using his hips, his arms, his back, his eyebrows, he acted out the music, providing an emotional story line parallel to the piece itself; he was narrative in flight. At some point in his adolescence, Bernstein must have discovered that he could express with his body whatever he thought or felt, a discovery that was just as important as a sexual awakening, though in his case the two were obviously related. Bernstein, one might say, liberated the Jewish body from the constraints felt by the immigrant generation, including his father, Sam, who relinquished his severe, stiff-collar demeanor only when celebrating the High Holidays with the Boston Hasidim. For Lenny, every day was a High Holiday. Most of the audience and his collaborators got used to his turbo-mobile style, or found it beautiful, even thrilling. But how, if you are his child, do you cope with a father whose sensuality enfolded everything?

After a whirlwind life as a young man, Bernstein married Felicia Montealegre, in 1951. He was thirty-three; she was twenty-nine. Montealegre was raised in Chile; her mother was Costa Rican and Catholic; her father, an American Jew, was a wealthy industrialist. A South American aristocrat who became socially ambitious in America, Felicia was an accomplished actress with an elevated elocutionary style that was losing favor to so-called naturalistic modes; she was good at narrating oratorios. Still, she had serious work for a while on the stage and in the burgeoning field of live TV drama. Once Bernstein became the music director of the New York Philharmonic, in 1958, she entertained the musical and social world at home. In general, she required rules and order, while her husband luxuriated in his own habits, some disciplined, some not. They were temperamentally at odds, but they adored each other.

They had three children: Jamie, who is now sixty-five; a boy, Alexander, and another girl, Nina, followed. Jamie says that her father was an ardent family man, attentive, affectionate, an unending didact who crammed his kids with poetry, music, Hebrew lessons. He was very much at home—when he was at home at all. The details of Jamie's memoir are intimate: Lenny eating Connecticut corn in the summer with his hands drenched in butter; or, back in New York, half awake and fragrant in the mornings. "In my mind's eye, my father is always in a scruffy brown wool bathrobe; my cheek still prickles at the memory of his scratchy morning hugs," she writes. You couldn't say of Bernstein, as you might of John Cheever (as revealed in his daughter Susan Cheever's sombre, brilliant book, "Home Before Dark"), that he was unreachable at times, or that his art absolutely came first. On the contrary, family was emotionally central to Bernstein. And family meant not just Felicia and the kids but his loving and foolish immigrant parents; his talented brother, Burton, a *New Yorker* writer; and his ebullient sister, Shirley, who ran a theatrical literary agency. Even in mid-career, Lenny would go off on holiday with Burtie and Shirley, the three of them joined in hilarity over childhood memories, complete with an invented nonsense language.

An eager paterfamilias at home, he remained sexually active with men. Felicia knew from the start and was hard-headed about it. At the time of their marriage, she wrote to him, "You are a homosexual and may never change—you don't admit to the possibility of a



"This prescription for Adderall will help you work hard enough to afford the drug you really need."

double life, but if your peace of mind, your health, your whole nervous system depends on a certain sexual pattern, what can you do? I am willing to accept you as you are, without being a martyr or sacrificing myself on the L.B. altar." But he did live a double life, and Felicia wound up tending the altar.

Jamie and the younger children knew nothing of their father's adventures away from home or of Felicia's way of coping with them. On the contrary, in Jamie's account of her childhood, one detects something like the fervent nostalgia of Russian expatriates for life before the revolution. There was glory then, ample country luxury as well as city luxury, faithful servants, tennis with Isaac Stern, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade from the windows of their apartment in the Dakota, and live music, much of it generated by Lenny sitting at the piano. The family gatherings were a conspiracy to have fun. Parents and children created rhyming nonsense songs for special occasions; they made clowning home movies ("What Ever Happened to Felicia Montealegre?," an overwrought salute to Bette Davis and Joan Crawford). If Lenny's effusiveness was sometimes hard to bear, plenty of smart people couldn't get enough of him, including Mike Nichols, Richard Avedon, Betty Comden, Adolph Green, and the young Stephen Sondheim. Lillian Hellman, terrifying to Jamie, was a growling presence. With that crew around, however, and L.B. driving the entertainments, the long evenings could become barbed—anagrams and other word games were played as life-and-death matters, and more than one participant, Jamie says, left the room in tears.

Jamie Bernstein's writing is devoted to what she directly experienced, altered, it seems, as little as possible by the passage of time. Leonard Bernstein is always "Daddy," not a figure in a novel, or the hero of myth, but an all too palpable man, with an endless capacity to please her or hurt her. Like the Tom Stoppard play "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead," the book offers an off-angle view of a genius. We hear relatively little about Leonard Bernstein as a composer or as a working musician, studying scores, rehearsing orchestras and singers. The musical triumphs away from New York, in Vienna, Tel Aviv, and elsewhere, and Bernstein's citizenly public life—his advocacy of civil rights and world peace—are no more than a distant excitement, like the sound of an offstage band. Nor is there much sense of his development as a composer. (For that, one should read Allen Shawn's excellent "Leonard Bernstein: An American Musician.") The four great Broadway scores ("On the Town," "Wonderful Town," "Candide," and "West Side Story") were all composed before Jamie was born or when she was a small child.



She did, however, live through the composition and the première, in 1976, of "1600 Pennsylvania Avenue," which Bernstein wrote with the lyricist Alan Jay Lerner, and, for the first time, she experienced some doubt about her father's grip on things. "The two collaborators wanted to make a major statement about the meaning of democracy: to remind their country of its true purpose," she writes. The high-minded show was so resounding a flop that it was never recorded. "Our father had been unassailably magnificent to us—just as he had been to the world," she goes on. "Now he seemed complex, flawed, mortal." Yet the music was not entirely lost. In 1997, the Bernstein and Lerner estates put together a concert piece for voices and orchestra called "A White House Cantata," which has been recorded by soloists and the London Symphony Orchestra, with Kent Nagano conducting. It is one of Bernstein's retrieved scores, an element in the continuous revaluation of his work, and much of the music, as Jamie Bernstein says, is inventive and tuneful.

Leonard Bernstein found conducting easy and composing excruciatingly difficult, yet he was sure that it was more important for him to compose. Despite his many sufferings, and a hostile initial reception to much of the concert work, he managed to produce a great deal of music. It's now a safe bet that the following will remain active repertory pieces: the three symphonies; the ballets "Fancy Free" and "Dybbuk"; the Serenade for violin, strings, percussion, and harp; the choral work "Chichester Psalms"; the film score for "On the Waterfront"; as well as the four early musicals and (maybe) "A White House Cantata." Bernstein wrote a satirical, jazzy short opera about a warring honeymoon couple, "Trouble in Tahiti," in 1952. Thirty-one years later, he folded "Trouble" into a longer, tragic opera about the couple's family, "A Quiet Place"—a combined work that's both dazzling and bewilderingly sad. In all, the reputation of his classical compositions has gone way up in recent decades. A single historical marker will suffice to show the shift. In 1983, Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College and the conductor of the American Symphony, wrote, in *Harper's*, a lengthy, contemptuous dismissal of Bernstein as a classical composer and conductor. "His career until now has been an accumulation of false starts, spent opportunities; a record of extensive exposure with ephemeral results." Yet last fall Botstein programmed Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 ("Kaddish") with his own orchestra, and, from the stage, he acknowledged that Bernstein has had the last laugh. The centenary year completes the restoration: most of Bernstein's early work as the conductor of the New York Philharmonic—part of the activity that Botstein was condemning—has been recently reissued in a hundred-CD box set from Sony, including classic performances of Ives, Copland, Mahler, and Stravinsky. At the moment, Bernstein's music is being played all over the world. On a single day, June 23rd, there will be concerts featuring his work in Richmond, Kansas City, Hong Kong, Bilbao, and Klingenberg am Main. Two Hollywood bio-pics, starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Bradley Cooper, are on the way.

"Kaddish," with its literally Heaven-storming narration ("O my father, ancient, hallowed, lonely, disappointed Father, rejected ruler of the universe"), will always remain troublesome—at

least until someone satisfactorily rewrites the rambunctiously blasphemous text. But the piece has some of Bernstein's most powerful and lyrically affecting music. The other monster—the Mass, composed for the opening of the Kennedy Center, in 1971—can never settle into routine concert life, since mounting it at all requires huge forces. The Mass is led by a priest, the Celebrant, who is joined, and sometimes assaulted, by a chorus of street kids, dancers, syncopated jazz, rock, and several other forces, in frenzied antiphonal bursts, questioning the necessity of faith. Near the end, the Celebrant breaks down, in a fourteen-minute monologue that reduces audiences either to tears or to exasperation, followed by a boy soprano singing "Sing God a simple song." Mixing Broadway, rock, jazz, and classical, it's the most ecumenical of Masses, with pages of exciting music—a pleasure-seeking rebellion, Jamie says, against "the rigidity of the musical Establishment, who decreed that all 'serious' music had to be composed using the twelve-tone system."

In 1973, Bernstein appeared to settle the tonal/atonal question, in the extraordinary videotaped Norton Lectures, "The Unanswered Question," in which he insisted, using Chomsky's linguistics as an analogue, that tonality was rooted in human biology and in the laws of physics. (Despite these assertions, he occasionally blinked, flirting in his post-Norton music with both atonality and twelve-tone rows.) The Norton Lectures are the most ambitious of his pedagogical efforts, adding historical and theoretical context to his warm-spirited earlier work for the Young People's Concerts, which CBS aired in prime time during the nineteen-fifties and sixties, and to his many filmed commentaries on Mahler, Beethoven, Brahms, Shostakovich, and others. So much productive activity (there are a half-dozen books, too) is almost impossible to imagine.

In 1970, before entering Harvard, Jamie Bernstein spent the summer at the Tanglewood Music Festival, where her father had flourished as a young man. After a while, she heard tales of his earlier days ("moonlit naked swims in the lake, scurrying between practice cabins . . . you weren't supposed to hear such things about your own father"). His other life became inescapable, and she wrote him a long letter, demanding answers. He denied everything, at Felicia's insistence, as Jamie now believes—an assertion that (perhaps unfairly) places the blame for lying on her mother. In any case, Jamie's sense of her father as a sexual being, and his superabundant warmth with his children, added to her own romantic difficulties. There were many boyfriends, some good, some not, but all, apparently, lacking the divine spark. The phrase for this, I suppose, is emotional incest; Lenny was all over her life, tying her up without meaning to. He enjoyed rock music in the sixties, especially the Beatles, and would accompany her to concerts and clubs. But sometimes his enjoyment spilled over:

> One night we all went to Casino Vail, a disco. They began playing the theme from "Zorba the Greek," of all things, and Daddy grabbed me. The next thing I knew we were dancing full tilt to the bouzouki music, just the two of us, while the crowd made a ring around us, clapping in rhythm and egging us on. Daddy pulled out a handkerchief and was waving it around above his head—then he was down on his knees! I danced in a circle around him; what else could I do? I was trapped: a mortified moon, doomed to eternal orbit around an ecstatic, sweaty, handkerchief-swirling sun.

She was dazzled, embarrassed, vaguely disgusted. In 1972, when she was a junior at Harvard, her father appeared with a young lover, Tom Cothran, and took up residence in Eliot House, his old dorm. For an academic year, he prepared the Norton Lectures. Professor Daddy, the campus hero! He stayed up half the night with undergraduates, talking and playing music, stealing her college social life.

After the early reveries of family happiness, frustration runs through the narrative; the story grows increasingly shadowed and anxious. Jamie had wanted to be a musician, but as a child she hated piano lessons. "Well, you'll never be a great pianist," Lenny told her, holding her in his lap, a remark that could be seen as hostile—or, possibly, as a benevolent warning against heartbreak. In any case, she was more of a rock fan than a classical kid, and for years wrote and performed songs herself, without much success. In the end, she wrote songs for her father on special occasions.

She looks back on her family life with an understanding of the distance between desire and happiness. Even Leonard Bernstein felt that distance. Fifty years ago, he could not live openly as a gay man, but he couldn't stop loving his wife, either, and he felt terribly guilty about what he put Felicia through. After twenty years of marriage, she was not doing well. Willing to serve as "Mrs. Maestro," she had given up most of her career. She developed eccentricities and odd illnesses, engaged in passionate busywork (collecting, decorating, gardening); she made paintings and threw them away. And then, in 1970, meaning well, she stepped into the social disaster of the century—a fund-raising party for the Black Panthers held in the Park Avenue family apartment, an event attended by Tom Wolfe, of *New York*, who published a poisonous (and funny) lampoon. Lenny, who was accustomed to brickbats, picked himself up and kept his conducting dates, but Jamie believes that Felicia, suffering from public humiliation, was never the same. At dinner one night, she pronounced a curse upon her husband: "*You're going to die a lonely, bitter old queen!*" Jamie says she uttered it as a joke, in the self-parodying tones of theatrical high camp. Maybe so, but it still sounds like the *maledizione* from "Rigoletto." Felicia turns out to be a victim of the family romance; perhaps next time the story needs to be told from her point of view.

By the mid-seventies, she was ill with cancer, and Lenny, having broken up with Cothran, returned to their apartment and nursed her until her death, at fifty-six, in 1978. And then, guilty and lost, he fell apart. The body electric no longer charmed everyone in sight. Adonis had become Silenus, sometimes drunk and mean, talking of sex too much, his hands too active, his tongue placed down unwilling throats. The extraordinary craving for sensation, for love, for contact, which he converted, refined, and fed back to his audience in lavishly expended musical effort—a gift to everyone—was wearing him out. Despite every medical

warning, he smoked incessantly, even in doctors' offices. When he could sleep at all, he slept an entire day. Mortified by his increasing physical squalor, Jamie was also dismayed by the entourage that surrounded him away from home. At the 1983 Houston première of his late opera "A Quiet Place," or in some distant foreign city, the after-concert party would include his manager, his publicist, various musical assistants, his audio engineer, his video director, local notables and social lions, handsome young men, and assorted hangers-on. The reception had become a champagne-and-caviar version of a Rolling Stones tour stop.

As he turned seventy, in 1988, there were worldwide celebrations and a huge event at Tanglewood with the Boston Symphony, at the conclusion of which, Jamie writes, "everyone was awash in emotion," but Bernstein, incontinent, "was awash from the waist down. And of course he had to go on stage and hug everyone. On camera." For Jamie, the difficulties in his last decade figured as both the ordinary disasters of old age and the awe-inspiring decay of a national monument. "Everything had become such an effort for him: his breathing, his insomnia, and all the additional three-score-and-ten indignities. His belly was terribly distended; while the rest of him seemed to be collapsing in on itself." Yet, in thinking of Bernstein's later years, one has to invoke the mysteries of artistic will, its capacity to redeem and transcend many kinds of failure. Perhaps only Thomas Mann could have mastered the ironies of Bernstein's story. As he fell apart physically and morally, he wrote some demanding and beautiful music (including the song cycle "Arias and Barcarolles"), and his work on the podium became ever more disciplined, often profound, even visionary.

Not all the performances from the nineteen-eighties are at the same level, but the best ones, recorded live at concerts, put him among the immortals. There was a series of Mozart symphonies with the Vienna Philharmonic; a fresh Mahler cycle recorded in Vienna, Amsterdam, and New York; a majestic Sibelius Fifth; Haydn, Schumann, Copland, Shostakovich; his own much abandoned, much revived 1956 show "Candide." The public acclaim and the music itself kept him going, and, again and again, he pulled himself together for a performance. Right at the end, in 1989, as the Wall was coming down, he led a powerful Beethoven's Ninth in Berlin, which was broadcast all over the world. The orchestral players were drawn from London, New York, Munich, Dresden, Paris, and St. Petersburg, in a kind of universal shout of happiness that Soviet Communism was finished. On the podium, the superb bone structure of his handsome brow was intact; a tuxedo pulled in the belly; his movements were not as fluent as earlier—he used his fists more—but he was completely in command. It was his last great public event. (All this late work—videotaped concerts and recordings—has been rereleased by Deutsche Grammophon as a gigantic box set. The recordings are individually available as well.)

He died in 1990, at seventy-two (young for a conductor), not alone, as Felicia had predicted, but attended by family and friends and saluted, as the cortège passed through the city streets, by New York hardhats ("Goodbye, Lenny!"). Charles Ives and Aaron Copland were great composers, but Bernstein was by far the greatest American musician. Occasionally, one is startled by a reminder. On YouTube, there is a filmed performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 4, from 1972, with the Vienna Philharmonic (the sound with good headphones is fine) that is astonishing for its transparent textures, its bold transitions from one mood to another. That symphony, with its musical sleigh bells, so reminiscent of childhood bliss, is a recurring motif in Jamie Bernstein's book. It's her Rosebud.

After L.B.'s death, chagrin gives way to relief; life resumes its usual shapes of success and failure. The overwhelmed children try to pull themselves together, and Jamie Bernstein finds a way—many ways, actually—of making a life out of music without being a musician, narrating concert works, creating an equivalent of the Young People's Concerts (the Bernstein Beat, devoted to his music), making a film about the training of young American instrumentalists. She and her brother and sister have devoted themselves to their father's name, his work, and his recordings, and have helped along restorative efforts on his compositions and much else. As the daughters of great men go, Jamie Bernstein has had a happy fate: the existence of this well-written book, with its poignancy and its shuddery detail—her father's fragrance in the morning—is a mark of sanity and survival. In telling his story, she got to write her own. ♦



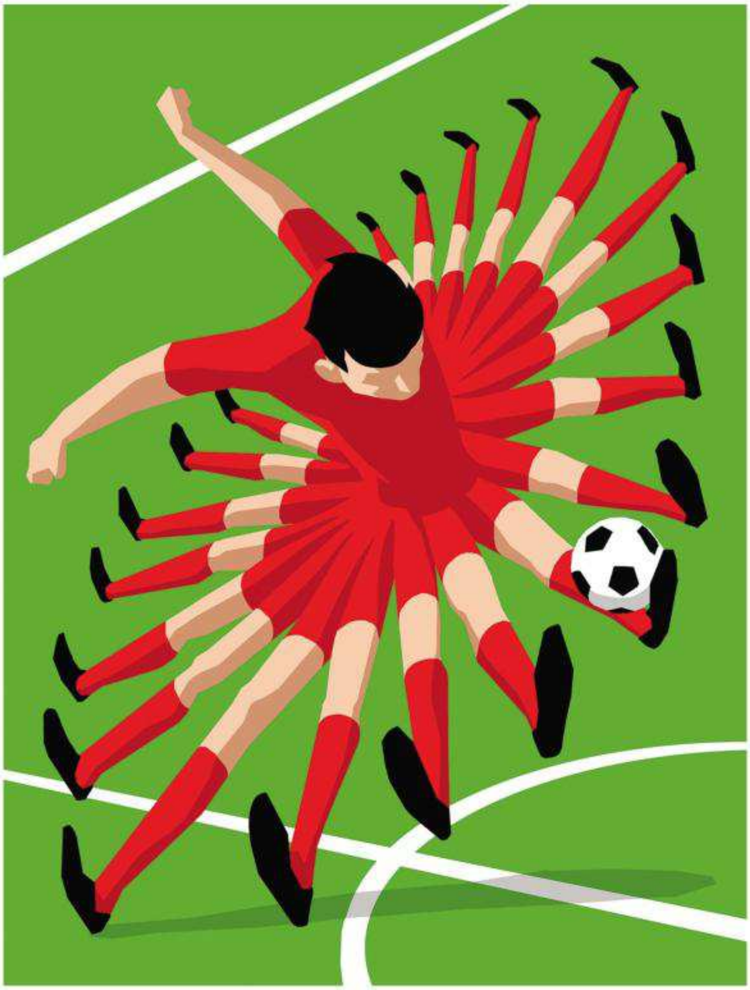
"I see your thirty. I hear your thirty. I validate your thirty."

BOOKS

GOAL-ORIENTED

How we watch soccer now.

BY LEO ROBSON



In soccer terms, I am what is known as a "neutral," someone who loves the sport but doesn't follow any particular club or team. This comes with certain drawbacks—requiring me, for instance, to devote energy and interest to all twenty participants in the English Premier League, the most competitive and popular in the world, as well as to the élite clubs from the other European soccer countries. Now and again, some turn of events—a wonder goal, or horror tackle, or unexpected trade—will force me to dig a little into the Superliga Argentina or the Brasileirão, where many of the best players start out but never stay. And when I'm feeling curious or apprehensive about the future of the game, and about the sheer range of soccer I might one day feel obliged to obsess over, I'll read up on Major League Soccer or the Chinese Super League—generally agreed to be rising forces, though still currently a place for second-rank talent and the occasional fading, pampered megastar.

Yet I am considered one of the lucky ones. Not long ago, in central London, I bumped into a male acquaintance and we started talking soccer. I mentioned in passing that I don't support a team, and he groaned, envying my freedom to "simply drift with the action," when he had spent his life "chained by the ankle to Tottenham Hotspur." When Immanuel Kant defined the true judgment of beauty as existing "apart from any interest," he was also describing the charmed position of the modern soccer neutral—able, say, to admire Lionel Messi's turbocharged yet feathery left foot, on display for Barcelona, without the mildest twinge of annoyance that he doesn't play for "us."

My neutralism has its limits: I will doggedly follow the progress of England's national team in the World Cup, which is now under way in Russia. But when England is, inevitably, knocked out—by the quarter-finals, in all likelihood—I will soon put it out of my mind and turn to the truly meaningful business of watching teams like Germany, Spain, and Brazil. It remains to be seen whether American enthusiasm will survive the U.S. team's failure even to qualify, but there's every reason to hope that it will. A recent Gallup poll found that soccer was the favorite sport to watch for seven per cent of Americans—higher than hockey, and only slightly lower than baseball. Then, there's the matter of the World Cup's peculiar pull. The sixty-four matches at the last tournament attracted a cumulative audience of more than three billion. With the possible exceptions of the Olympic Games and the verdict of a papal conclave, no other recurring event is capable of inspiring so much global fervor.

But, unlike the Olympics—the only occasion when most people have any time for figure skating or race walking—the World Cup serves as a quadrennial testament to soccer's year-round appeal. By any number of metrics, it is the most popular sport on earth, and the current tournament arrives at a moment of new highs. The leading European leagues—England, France, Germany, Spain, Italy—generated almost eighteen billion dollars during the 2016-17 season, a nine-per-cent increase, and Manchester United recently posted record annual revenues for a single club (around eight hundred million dollars). Television broadcast rights continue to fetch eye-watering

Television has heightened the game's excitement, boosting its global dominance.

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

sums, and, earlier this month, Amazon entered the soccer market for the first time. The Portuguese player Cristiano Ronaldo has a larger Instagram following—a hundred and twenty-eight million—than anyone except Selena Gomez, and is the most highly paid sports star in the world, outpacing LeBron James and Roger Federer. And the World Cup has brought a shelf of new and updated books treating the subject from every conceivable angle: from social history to tactical minutiae, and from soccer's future as an outpost of Big Data to its ever-growing status as an object of aesthetic wonder.

For most of soccer's history, the idea of nonpartisan connoisseurship would have been unthinkable. From its earliest days as a traditional English pastime, the game was a tribal affair—defined by one historian as "more or less institutionalized violence between villages or different parts of villages." By 1600, it had been banned by Edward II, Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VII, Henry VIII, James I of Scotland, James IV of Scotland, and Elizabeth I. Yet these edicts had little effect on the game's appeal or on its unruliness. In the sixteen-sixties, Samuel Pepys noted that London, one frosty morning, was full of footballs. In 1817, Walter Scott informed his friend Washington Irving, who was visiting Scotland, that it wasn't safe for local teams to play against each other: "the old clannish spirit was too apt to break out."

As Tony Collins recounts in a brisk forthcoming survey, "How Football Began" (Routledge), the game's transformation from folk pursuit to global industry began in the élite British schools of the nineteenth century, where Anglican educators such as Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School, promoted sports as a way of harnessing youthful energies that had previously found rebellious outlets. Arnold's tenure was memorialized in Thomas Hughes's autobiographical novel, "Tom Brown's Schooldays" (1857), and, with cooler retrospect, by Lytton Strachey, in "Eminent Victorians" (1918). Strachey presented Arnold as an "earnest enthusiast" who, in his efforts to make his pupils Christian gentlemen, merely insured that the English schoolboy with no interest in soccer became "a contradiction in terms."

The game's growth beyond these enclaves was hampered by a lack of central planning. "Football," in the mid-nineteenth century, was played with sufficient variation to serve as a forerunner not only of soccer but of rugby football, Australian-rules football, and gridiron football. (When "Tom Brown's Schooldays" was published in the U.S., it sold two hundred and twenty-five thousand copies in a year.) Attempts to introduce the game at Cambridge University during the eighteen-forties foundered, because, as one student wrote, "every man played the rules he had been accustomed to at his public school. I remember how the Eton men howled at the Rugby men for handling the ball." A compromise, the Cambridge Rules, was drawn up and a campaign for universal standards spread. In 1863, representatives from eleven clubs formed the Football Association—the term "soccer" is a contraction of "association football"—and set about devising the Laws of the Game, which included the maximum length of the pitch (two hundred yards) and a prohibition on throwing the ball. Later additions mandated the number of players (eleven a side) and introduced the referee, the goal net, the crossbar, the free kick, and the dreaded penalty spot.

At first, soccer was a genteel sport—among the F.A.'s founding members was a team fielded by the civil service—but it gradually caught on in the industrial North. Legislation had shortened the Saturday workday, introducing the distinctive leisure period known as the "week-end," and employers, like headmasters a few decades earlier, began promoting the game as a wholesome pastime for their workers. In the eighteen-seventies, the arrival of cup competitions, both national and regional, "rapidly and unexpectedly became a focus for local pride and civic rivalries," Collins writes. Teams from mill towns like Darwen and Blackburn could play against each other as well as against the Old Etonians.

Before long, merchants, engineers, travel agents, and seamen took the new pastime abroad, founding the first soccer clubs in Germany, Spain, France, Argentina, and Russia. In Brazil, the game was introduced by Charles William Miller, the São Paulo-born son of a Scottish railway engineer, who went to school in England and returned in the eighteen-nineties with a pair of leather balls and a copy of the rules from the Hampshire branch of the F.A. (His legacy as the man who brought soccer to perhaps the most besotted of all soccer nations endures in a cross-legged maneuver known as the *chaleira*.) Even countries with their own footballing traditions embraced the new, codified sport. In Italy, although soccer is still known as *calcio*—after a Florentine game that originated in the sixteenth century—the British influence is enshrined in such Anglicized names as A.C. Milan, one of the country's most distinguished club sides.

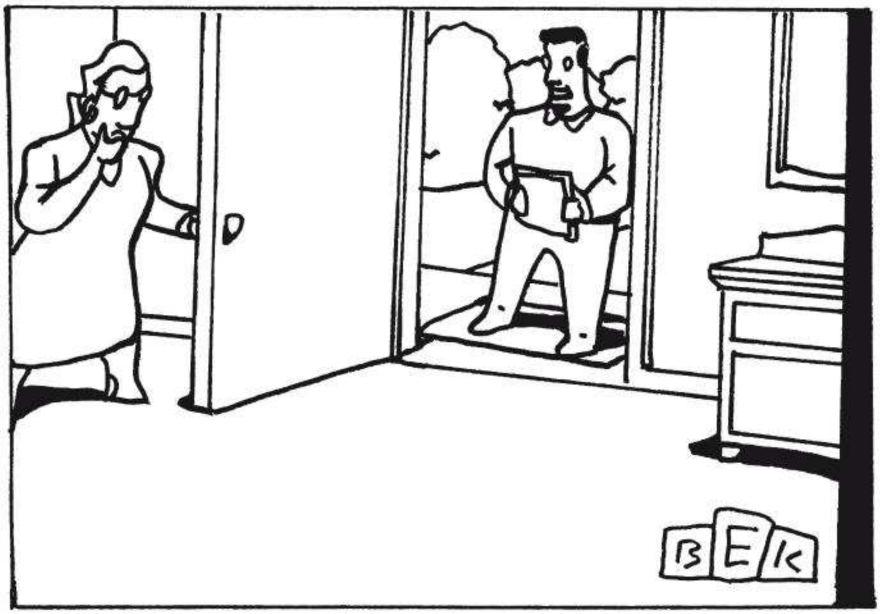
Collins credits soccer's global success to its early embrace of meritocracy. In 1888, the F.A., three years after permitting players to go professional, established the Football League, with a season-long calendar of home-and-away fixtures—developments rightly perceived as threatening to the Victorian cult of the gentleman amateur, which continued to rule cricket and rugby. The model of organized competition, financed by a paying audience, could be emulated elsewhere, thereby liberating soccer from English oversight. As far afield as Buenos Aires, rugby matches were controlled by the Rugby Football Union, but every soccer country was free to start its own association; in 1904, a world governing body, FIFA, was founded, with seven members.

The F.A. wasn't among them. Foreigners' soccer was viewed with haughty indifference by the English soccer establishment. Charles Sutcliffe, the president of the Football League in the nineteen-twenties, boasted that he didn't know the name of a single club or individual on the Continent who was involved in soccer. But chauvinism came at a cost: an independent scene was developing, and isolation bred stasis. After the 1924 Olympics, Gabriel Hanot, a French player, said that comparing the Uruguay team, which won, to England's team, which had refused to take part, was "like comparing Arab

thoroughbreds to farm horses." By 1930, the year of the first FIFA World Cup, in which the U.S. competed but England did not, Jimmy Hogan, an English former player who had spent his coaching career abroad, complained, "We are absolutely out of date." Soccer, as played in its mother country, remained primitive in technique and tactically complacent, with an emphasis on moral fibre that had begun to look increasingly quixotic.

The illusion of superiority survived into the postwar period, sustained by the fact that the national team had never lost on its home turf. But in 1953 Hungary, fielding a strong side known ever after as the Mighty Magyars, travelled to London and won 6–3. (In one match report, an overzealous English defender, having been wrong-footed by a Hungarian, was described as rushing past his opponent "like a fire engine going to the wrong fire.") Some pride was salvaged the next year when Wolverhampton Wanderers defeated Budapest Honvéd; the *Daily Mail* called the Wolves team "champions of the world." But the renewed conviction that British was still best became untenable after the establishment, in the 1955-56 season, of the European Cup. The English Football League forbade its clubs to enter—the chairman declared that the Continental game had "too many wogs and dagos"—and, though Manchester United ignored the ban, the Cup's early years were dominated by Real Madrid and Benfica.

The emergence of an international soccer scene prompted the first stirrings of interest from a neutral perspective. A. J. Liebling, covering the 1952 Helsinki Olympics for this magazine, attended a game between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and admired the "speed and intricacy of the play," and "the *legerdepied* of the dribbler who seems to offer the ball to his charging opponent and then takes it away, leaving the opponent prone." Reflecting on the 1954 World Cup, the first to be televised in Britain, the former Arsenal player Bernard Joy wrote that the viewers at home had been "impressed by the attractive, artistic way the leading foreign teams played. . . . We murmured, 'Good football,' about them as though it had nothing to do with the winning of matches." Soccer's cultural recognition was broadened by television—in the past, geography had more or less dictated access—and also by a series of dramatic events that made a claim on general attention. In the next decade and a half, England had its first soccer tragedy, the Munich air disaster, in which eight Manchester United players died; its first soccer superstar, George Best, the so-called fifth Beatle; its first and only World Cup victory; its first knighthoods for a soccer player and a manager. English soccer was at last becoming part of the global game.



"Sorry for knocking on your door—I just wanted to know if you had a few minutes for me to scare you."

Between the visit of the Mighty Magyars and England's World Cup victory, in 1966, British fans began to learn the names of foreign stars and even, as the journalist Brian Glanville noted, "managed to pronounce them correctly." Soon there was foreign vocabulary, too: the Italian defensive strategy, *catenaccio;* the wandering "sweeper" position, the *libero;* the Dutch tactical revolution, *totaalvoetbal.* Total Football, made famous by Johan Cruijff, a star player for the Amsterdam team Ajax and for Barcelona, promoted possession-based soccer—retaining the ball through short, precise passes, rather than risk losing it by booting up the field—with every player equipped, at least in theory, to occupy every role on the pitch.

Britain's soccer culture appeared to be growing more relaxed and receptive. The ranks of sports journalists were joined by the philosopher A. J. Ayer, the Viennese émigré musician Hans Keller, and John Sparrow, the warden of All Souls College, Oxford. In his chirpy "History of British Football" (1968), the musicologist Percy M. Young identified the arrival of a recognizable new type—the soccer connoisseur, who would watch only "attractive football." But even among connoisseurs tribalism often won out; the point of soccer was still to chant and cheer, not analyze and admire. The television presenter Michael Parkinson wrote that, despite having seen Real Madrid and A.C. Milan play, he had "never got over Barnsley," the Yorkshire team to which his father had introduced him as a boy. In 1980, the Labour M.P. Roy Hattersley estimated that although England might contain "a few thousand purists who see football as an art and watch it to enjoy the objective beauty of rhythm and form," it remained to a very large degree a pastime for partisans: "The rest of us want to see *our* team win."

Wanting to see that happen more than most were the diehard followers, the hooligans, both in Britain and in the rest of Europe, whose brawling tarnished the game. After an accidental

fire at a stadium in Bradford, in 1985, the London *Sunday Times* called soccer "a slum sport played in slum stadiums and increasingly watched by slum people, who deter decent folk from turning up." Later the same year, at the European Cup Final, in Brussels, a charge of Liverpool fans caused a stadium wall to collapse, killing thirty-nine people, most of them supporters of the Turin team Juventus. (English clubs were banned from European competitions for five years.) Clubs became preoccupied with crowd control, often herding groups of spectators into large metal pens, and in 1989, at Hillsborough, in Sheffield, ninety-six Liverpool fans were crushed to death. *The Economist* ran a cover with the headline "THE GAME THAT DIED."

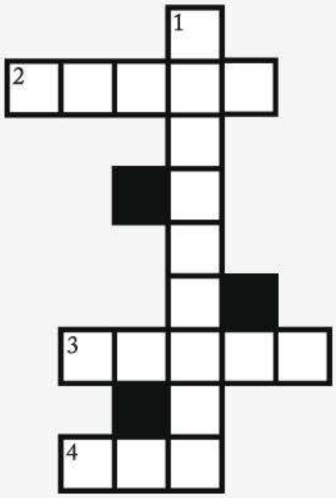
But it hadn't. Barely a year later, soccer was the game that survived and prospered. The England team excelled in the 1990 World Cup, reaching the semifinals. The BBC gave the tournament a self-consciously upmarket presentation, with Pavarotti singing "Nessun Dorma," and England's young star, Paul Gascoigne, known universally as Gazza, emerged as a national figure when he broke down in tears during a match. A report commissioned by the British government recommended getting rid of the traditional, standing-room-only "terraces"—a measure widely resented as an attempt to gentrify the game. But the all-seater stadiums that replaced them, and the higher ticket prices they necessitated, were not the only factor in soccer's social shakeup. Chairmen and media executives had been conspiring to introduce the sport to modern capitalism. In 1992, the highest tier of the English Football League, the First Division, spun itself off into an autonomous corporate entity, the Premier League, enabling the big teams to negotiate their own lucrative television deal, with Rupert Murdoch's recently formed satellite service.

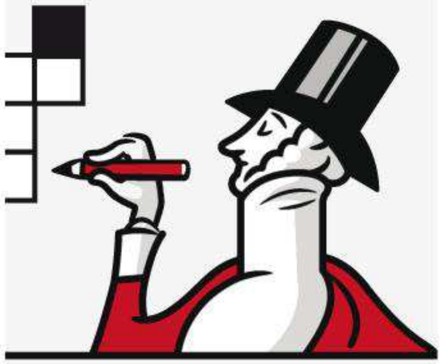
It was at this juncture that "Fever Pitch," Nick Hornby's memoir about his obsessive support for Arsenal, was published, just in time to attract a large, educated readership newly interested in the game. Hornby accepted the post-Hillsborough reforms, reasoning that "the end of terrace culture" would not mean "the end of noise and atmosphere and all the things that make football memorable." Yet his book also served as a rebuke to a new kind of soccer engagement. He identified himself as "an Arsenal fan first and a football fan second," and wrote with detachment verging on contempt about "the middle-class football fans" who admire the "cerebral attributes" of certain players. Some people might applaud the virtuosity of opposition players, or lose themselves in "the patterns and rhythms of football without caring about the score," but that wasn't fandom. Arsenal's particular style of play "is beside the point for most of us," he wrote. "I go to football for loads of reasons, but I don't go for entertainment." Nonetheless, football was becoming subsumed into the entertainment industry. "Fever Pitch" soon became a movie, with Colin Firth in the Hornby role.

When I first got into soccer, as a child, in the early nineties, it looked as if I were doomed to be one of those people who, in Roy Hattersley's phrase, inherit "their fathers' frustrations." Initially, it didn't seem as if the frustration would be too great: in 1992, my dad's team, Leeds United, won the First Division, just before it became the Premier League. But the next season Manchester United emerged as the dominant side, destroying the competition week after week. A reporter and Manchester United fan named Jim White sensed that history was being made, and decided to write a book about the team's progress. White was a family friend, so when the team played Leeds he took me along.

In his book, "Are You Watching, Liverpool?" (1995), White wrote about my eight-year-old self, expressing surprise that I enjoyed the game even though Leeds lost: "I looked at him and saw the picture of awed excitement his face had become and said that I thought he wasn't really a Leeds fan." He'd noticed how much I loved a song the Manchester fans sang in praise of one of their players, and suggested that my avowed support of Leeds was just a way of sparing my father's feelings. It didn't occur to him that I was developing an appetite for the sport per

Introducing
The New Yorker
Crossword Puzzle





1. Stack for a publisher's assistant.
2. Dulce et _______ (Horatian maxim).
3. Flavoring used in biscotti.
4. Landmark 1973 court case, familiarly.

Do the rest of the puzzle, and find a new one every week, at newyorker.com/crossword

THE NEW YORKER

se—that I'd have considered it ungrateful to dismiss the winning side's attacking flair simply because my father happened to have come from a different northern city. My dispassionate leanings were vindicated a couple of months later, when the U.S. hosted the World Cup. England had failed to qualify, but how much did that really matter, when you had Italy, Holland, Brazil? Like Liebling in Finland, I was free to admire the *legerdepied*.

TV certainly played a role in forging my untribal attitude. Like most families, we didn't have Murdoch's satellite package, but we still caught highlights of Premiership games on the BBC's weekly roundup "Match of the Day," and, for the first time, it was easy to watch soccer being played outside the British Isles. After Gazza went to play for an Italian club, Channel 4, a terrestrial station, acquired the broadcast rights for matches from the Italian Serie A, which had many of the best players. The game itself was becoming more fluid and watchable—the safe but boring play of passing the ball back to the hands of one's own goalkeeper had been outlawed—and the presentation of the game on TV was growing in sophistication: more cameras, more pundits, more replays, and other studio gimmicks, all serving to heighten the drama of games and rivalries. The top clubs, flush with TV money, signed expensive foreign stars in ever greater numbers. (Today, almost seventy per cent of the players in England's Premier League come from abroad.)

In his book, Jim White deplored the ongoing process of "commercialization." But he seems not to have anticipated the long-term impact of consumerism on the traditional habits of fandom. The "importation" of players wasn't unprecedented, but television and the game's embrace of capitalism were always bound to erode its local foundations. Within a few years, White was lamenting the fact that his beloved Manchester United had become the team of choice for soccer moms in California.

Globalizing impulses helped bring about a flourishing of neutralism. In "Soccer in Sun and Shadow," an influential collection of reflections and vignettes which appeared in English in 1997, the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano defined himself as "a beggar for good soccer." When it occurs, he wrote, "I give thanks for the miracle and I don't give a damn which team or country performs it." The game replaced the team as the subject of fandom, the source of pleasure and pain, the ethos to live by.

A number of recent books, timed for the World Cup, adopt a similar approach and add a playful pop-philosophical veneer. Laurent Dubois, a historian at Duke, where he teaches a course in "soccer politics," presents his book "The Language of the Game" (Basic) as a "love letter" or "offering" to football, which he defines as "probably the most universal language on the planet" and "the most tantric of sports." In "What We Think About When We Think About Soccer" (Penguin), the British philosopher Simon Critchley attempts to provide "a phenomenology of the beautiful game . . . a poetics of football experience," and advocates a position that he defines variously as "absolute distance," "aesthetic distance," and "a kind of self-forgetfulness."

Both books tend toward the gnomic. For Dubois, the face of the French player Lilian Thuram, after scoring, confronts us with a fundamental question: "What, exactly, is a goal?" Critchley, riffing on Thomas Nagel's famous thought experiment about the unknowability of a bat's perspective, asks, "What is it like to be a ball?" Dubois and Critchley share a favorite modern player, the scintillating French midfielder Zinedine Zidane. Graceful yet dynamic, combusting even in repose, Zidane is best known for acts of virtuosity and extremity: a move known as the *roulette*, in which he pulled the ball backward with the sole of his right foot, performed a swift pirouette, and dribbled off in the other direction; an explosive, out-of-nowhere volley that produced Real Madrid's winning goal, against Bayer Leverkusen, in the 2002 Champions League Final; and, most notorious, in the 2006 World Cup Final, a head-butt on the Italian defender Marco Materazzi, his final action as a player.

Zidane has attracted an unusual amount of attention from writers, and the task of rendering his presence on the page elicits some strenuous effects. In an essay on the 2002 volley, "Fallen from the Sky," Javier Marías proclaimed that "the gift became flesh, and then verb." Jean-Philippe Toussaint, in his pamphlet "Zidane's Melancholy," invoked Zeno's paradox to question whether Zidane's head could actually have reached Materazzi's chest. More recently, Karl Ove Knausgaard wrote that Zidane's "every move" at the 2006 World Cup was "a joy to behold"—even the head-butt was "entirely rational"—and Tom McCarthy mused that Zinedine Zidane's head was ineluctably drawn to the double "Z" in his antagonist's surname, calling the head-butt "perhaps the most decisive rite typography has been accorded in our era." Such poetic flights, for all their idiosyncrasy, constitute a more or less natural response to the way we watch soccer today. Feats that last a split second, once they are endlessly replayed in slow motion from a dozen camera angles, acquire an aestheticized, even mythic quality.

But media saturation has also given rise to an opposite, if no less fetishistic, way of thinking about soccer—a focus on tactical analysis and data crunching, whereby the inherently fluid rhythm of the game is dissected into statistically surveyable chunks. On TV, the close reading of match data, such as the percentage of match time each team has the ball, or a player's number of "assists"—a term borrowed from American commentary—adds texture to a game in which the main event, a goal, is notably rare.

Pundits caught the Big Data bug from coaches. As Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski explain in the new edition of their rich, if rambling, book "Soccernomics" (Nation), the game's store of inherited anecdotes and ingrained habits is gradually being replaced by data collection and the study of things like a player's "expected goals"—moments that, based on the nature of the scoring opportunity, should have produced a goal but didn't. There's a strong North American presence in the data revolution. Clubs from Major League Soccer have been active in developing analytics departments—the 2017 league final, between Toronto F.C. and the Seattle Sounders, was billed as the "nerd derby." But the empirical turn is taking place in Europe,

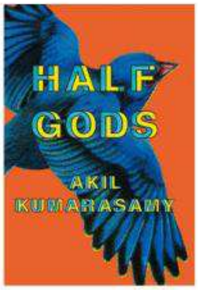
too, where smaller teams with minimal spending power are eager to find an advantage. Coventry City recently employed the political economist Chris Anderson, formerly of Cornell and the author of "The Numbers Game," a kind of soccer version of Michael Lewis's "Moneyball."

Perhaps inevitably, soccer aesthetes like Simon Critchley are hostile toward the statistical approach, just as traditionalists like Hornby were suspicious of the aesthetes. Critchley warns against "the error of objectivism," insisting on the importance of such unquantifiable factors as "passion" and "grit." These laments aren't limited to the sidelines: Pablo Mastroeni, a former M.L.S. coach, said, "Stats will lose to the human spirit every day of the week."

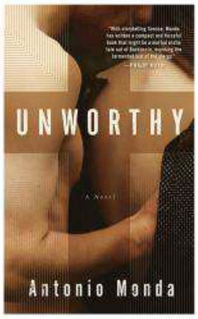
But is attention to detail really antithetical to the game's "spirit" and theory the enemy of beauty? The astonishing underdog success of Leicester City, which won the Premier League in 2016—a story Critchley loves—owed much to analytics. And, in the past decade, the emergence of *tiki-taka*, a tactical descendant of Total Football perfected by Pep Guardiola when he managed Barcelona, showed that intricate systems—Guardiola divides the pitch into twenty zones—were not just a fussy distraction but could produce soccer that was both attractive and effective.

A different way of thinking about the drive to render soccer scientific may be as a kind of compliment to the game's inherent instability, its capacity for generating anomalies, springing surprises, outwitting plans—the very things that fascinate the neutrals and break the hearts of the tribalists. If the people watching at home are interested in the possession stats and "heat maps," that doesn't presage the reduction of soccer to figures and formulas. It is more like the scratching of an itch—the fulfillment of an inevitable curiosity about what was really going on while we were cheering and checking our phones and looking at the wrong part of the screen. Perhaps, too, it reflects a desire for something real and adult and sober that might justify watching twenty-two grown men in cleats and colored jerseys charge about a strip of painted grass, occasionally doing something beautiful. ♦

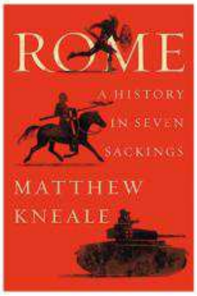
BRIEFLY NOTED



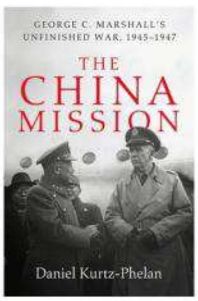
Half Gods, *by Akil Kumarasamy (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).* Thick with suburban magic realism, this novel-in-stories tracks three generations of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka, living in Jersey City. A teen-ager named Arjun feels guilty about asking his brother to pray for domestic stability while the family's country burns. His grandfather, whose wife and children were killed in Sri Lanka, recites Tamil poetry at the television. "Only myth had any real pleasure left for him," Arjun observes. In episodes spanning a century or so, family dramas mingle with tales of murder in colonial Ceylon, of an Angolan butcher who names his daughter for a sea nymph, of a man who defiantly sticks out his tongue as he is burned alive. The recurrent theme is one of human life thrown off course by disaster, whether world-historical or mundane.



Unworthy, *by Antonio Monda, translated from the Italian by John Cullen (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday).* The narrator of this short novel is a young Catholic priest suffering under the strain of a double life: in spite of his vows, he continues to sleep with women. After falling in love with one of them, he begins stealing from his church to buy her gifts. His agonized confessions amount to a meditation on the contradictions of a calling that demands both a sensitivity to the beauty of God's creation and the restraint to remain detached from its most intense pleasures. "There's no morning, no day, no moment when I don't thank him for this frailty that makes me feel human, and for the joy my sin gives me," the priest confides.



Rome, *by Matthew Kneale (Simon & Schuster).* This propulsive "history in seven sackings" tells the story of Rome from the Gauls' invasion, in 387 B.C., to the arrival of the Nazis, in 1943. Kneale depicts the city as its various attackers encountered it: Gauls, arriving naked on horseback, found a nearly rural settlement; the Visigoths, invading eight centuries later, laid waste to unimaginable architectural marvels. He carefully charts continuity as well as destruction: when the Normans came, in 1084, many ruins were still integral to daily life; the crumbling Colosseum had become "the city's largest housing complex." The buildings, vastly altered yet recognizable, epitomize a civilization repeatedly threatened yet still thriving today.



The China Mission, *by Daniel Kurtz-Phelan (Norton).* Shortly after the end of the Second World War, President Truman dispatched General George Marshall to broker a peace deal between China's repressive National Government and the revolutionaries led by Mao Zedong. Kurtz-Phelan's detailed account of the diplomatic mission's failure reads like a parable of America's evangelizing idealism and paternalistic hubris. Marshall spoke of "the awakening of backward and colonial peoples" and handed Chairman Chiang Kai-shek a draft bill of rights, calling it "a dose of American medicine." For China-watchers back home, the mission's success was a foregone conclusion. But a ceasefire quickly collapsed and soon the Communists were on their way to military victory.

ON TELEVISION

PAST IMPERFECT

Reckoning with childhood abuse in "The Tale."

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM



"No bad horses, only bad riders," Mrs. G, the riding coach of a thirteen-year-old girl, says. She's gentle, coaxing. It seems like good advice—her charge needs to get back on after being thrown. It's also a kind of hypnosis: whatever happens now, it will be the girl's responsibility. No bad lives, only bad people.

HBO's "The Tale," a harrowing and wise two-hour drama about childhood sexual abuse, was directed by Jennifer Fox, based on an autobiographical story that Fox has been trying to tell, in many forms, for nearly four decades. (It permeates her globe-trotting documentary series from 2007, "Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman.") When we first meet the adult Fox, played by Laura Dern, she's a workaholic iconoclast who lives in a gorgeous loft with her loving fiancé, played by Common. Her life seems idyllic, if a bit intense: as she edits "Flying," she ducks voice mails from her mother, who is desperate to talk to her about a disturbing story called "The Tale"—supposedly fictional—that Fox wrote when she was in middle school. The subject matter is something that Fox shrugs off as ancient history: Bill, her "first boyfriend," a middle-aged man who was her running coach, back when she spent weekends training at a local ranch. Her mother, Fox insists, is just being a prude.

After Fox reads "The Tale," however, she starts having destabilizing flashbacks: intrusive memories, blurred to the point that she can't entirely tell what is real and what is not—hints of a narrative that she can't admit she already knows. In the first, elegiac version of these scenes, Fox's memories are bucolic, all soft pop and polo shirts, and her younger self is played by Jessica Sarah Flaum, a pretty young teen-ager. Then a woman who knew Fox at the time tells her how she actually looked: "like a little boy, so afraid—you barely said two words." In a panic, Fox drives to her mother's house and flips through old photo albums—and sighs in relief when she sees an image of Flaum. No, her mother explains: that picture is from 1975, two years later. "Let me show you thirteen," she says, pointing to a sweet, smiling child. "I was so *little*," Fox says, dismayed.

Immediately, we rewatch the scenes that we've already viewed—Fox's first day at the ranch; a secret smile with Mrs. G over dinner—only, this time, the young Jenny is played by Isabelle Nélisse, who was eleven years old during filming. For the rest of the movie, the terrific Nélisse portrays the author of "The Tale," an unreliable narrator who is determined to seize control of her older self's story, to reframe it as an adventure—a casting gambit that forces the viewer to see every scene as negotiable. It's an early indication of the show's canny theatricality, like casting the blond Dern as the dark Fox, or using the controlled sheen of commercial fiction instead of the pass-the-camera grit of Fox's documentary work. The aesthetic is abstracted, staged and stylized; it has a distancing effect that creates a safe place to explore dangerous ideas.

Spinning out, the adult Fox tracks down the people she knew at the ranch, arriving for each meeting—with an elderly Mrs. G, among others—bearing photographs, pretending that she's merely nostalgic. (When she hires a detective, she insists that she's not trying to build a legal case. "We had a *relationship*," she explains, stiffly.) But she also slips into dreamlike Socratic interrogations of her younger self and of her abuser, hovering inside her past, like Emily in "Our Town." At one point, Dern stands behind Nélisse as the two stare into Bill's bathroom mirror, bickering over why

The show is lit up by anger, but it has a stirring, inspiring streak.

 ILLUSTRATION BY DEANNA HALSALL

the thirteen-year-old is staying overnight with a man she barely knows. "Stop! You've become just like all of them!" the young Jenny shouts, as if her future self were her mother. "You just want to tell me what to do. It's my life. Mine. Not yours. Let me *live*."

There is no question that what happens to Jenny is abuse. "The Tale" includes graphic sex scenes (using an adult body double) that won't let us wave away Bill's behavior. He's a con man, who talks endlessly about honesty, who sees his abuse as groovy social nonconformity—and who elides consent by telling the young Jenny that she is a special girl, making bold choices. Mrs. G's role is even more unsettling, a mystery Fox can't crack. When she begs, "I just want to know you," the dream Mrs. G replies, coolly, "You can't." (The dark refrain of the movie is a familiar one these days: "It was the seventies.") But it's impossible to escape the film's existential dilemma: without this trauma, the woman intrepid enough to direct "The Tale"—a joyful risk-taker who, during a political protest, steps out of a car when her companion warns her not to, and then floats through the crowd in bliss—might not exist. She's become her story's creature, for better or worse.

From her younger self's perspective, Fox is the one at fault, for playing a victim rather than taking pride in having worked through the pain. ("No bad horses, only bad riders.") But the older Fox is in mourning for what the younger one can't see: that the sophistication she thought drew adults to her was really a terrible naïveté. In her forties, she's suddenly ravenous to fill in the gaps in her knowledge. Even the nightmarish Bill (Jason Ritter) gets to have his say. As he drives a car, the adult Fox rides shotgun, filming him, letting him yammer on about the power of a child's love. When she explains to him, "I hoped you would save me from my family," he tilts his head and asks, quizzically, "*Didn't* I?"

Some of the most fascinating scenes take place in a documentary-making class, where Fox teaches her students how to build rapport with their subjects, and then push past their resistance. "You talk people into anything," her fiancé tells her, as praise. But there's an uneasy suggestion that her gifts also mirror those of the people who ensnared her. Her core values—her disdain for marriage, the fact that she's never had children—now look suspect, as if they were not choices but symptoms. In one of the saddest scenes, Fox, full of agitated bravado, coerces a student to tell the class how she lost her virginity. "If you're not going to be able to talk about sex, I don't know how you're going to interview other people about all kinds of shit," she sneers. The student's story turns out to be lovely—a sweet teen-age memory—and Fox's mouth twists in misery. She's stumbled on what she's lost: a life story that is private, rather than secret.

Toward the end of "The Tale," Fox has a showdown with herself, one that neither self wins. "You lied to me!" the adult Fox says. "You told me it was a *good* thing, all these years."

"It was," the younger Jenny insists, clutching her own version of the story to her chest, triumphant and defiant. "I got an A." There's a brash dark comedy to the moment, a rude clash of perspectives that has obvious relevance this year, if you've been hanging out with almost any woman, in the wake of #MeToo. An acquaintance who slept with her married professor told me that she would have laughed, back then, at the idea that she was the weak one—she would have to be his wife's age before she saw it that way. A friend who had been in love with a camp administrator understood only decades later that he had groomed and exploited her. When women are alone with one another, the audit begins.

"The Tale" is lit up by a clarifying anger, but it has a stirring, inspiring streak—it's about mastering a story by finding the right way to tell it. It's one of a set of new shows—among them Showtime's excellent "SMILF" and Amazon's late, lamented "One Mississippi"—that put the abused woman in the auteur position, a phenomenon with radical potential. "The Tale" is certainly a hard watch, the kind that trigger warnings were designed for. But it's made for this moment. It's about the vast gulf between what we know now and what we knew then, about the inevitability and the uselessness of gaining perspective. Fox wants to save a version of herself that's already been revised. You can't be both selves at once. ♦

Advertisement

Overcoming major depression and anxiety is no joke. But it is possible.
McLean HOSPITAL
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL AFFILIATE
844.335.5140
McLeanHospital.org


TOM BIHN
The Classic Cafe Shoulder Bag
TOMBIHN.COM

New Yorker Cartoon Prints

Find your favorite cartoon on virtually any topic at **newyorkerstore.com**

Enter TNY20 for 20% off.



"He tells it like it is."

Paul Noth, August 29, 2016

THE NEW YORKER

A CRITIC AT LARGE

SOUNDGARDEN

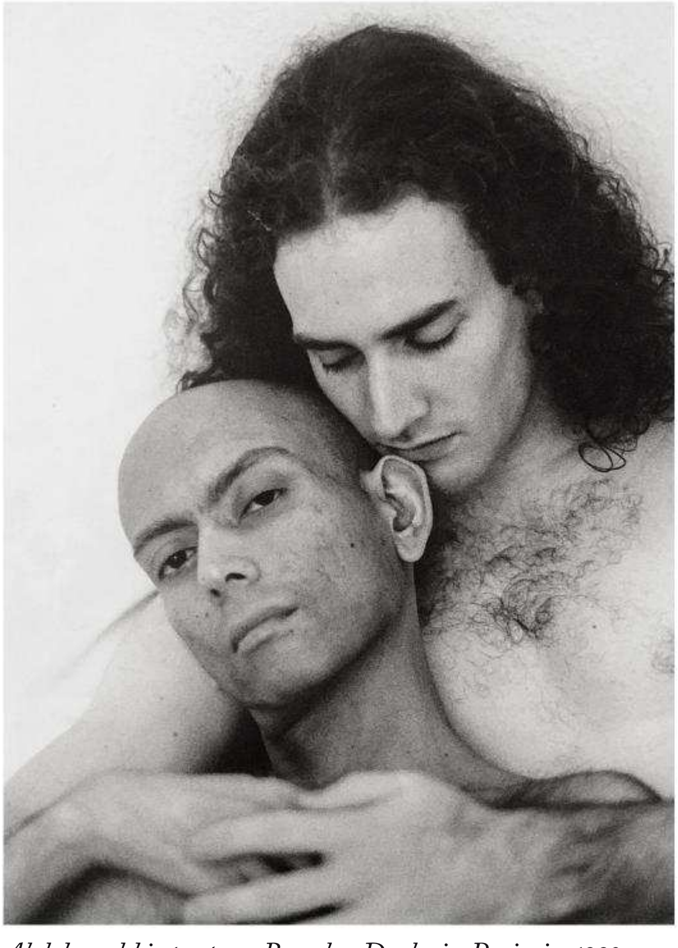
Reza Abdoh's theatrical resonance.

BY HILTON ALS

It is always startling to hear the dead breathe again, speak again. Reza Abdoh, one of the more profound and original theatre artists of the twentieth century, died, of AIDS, in the spring of 1995; he was thirty-two. And yet it's his voice—political, inconsolable—that we have the privilege of hearing once again in "Reza Abdoh" (at MOMA PS1), the first large-scale retrospective devoted to this Iranian-born spinner of epic, omnivorous tales about queerness, AIDS, American TV and violence, the cult of celebrity, and the gay child's relationship to the patriarchy. Co-curated by the museum's director, Klaus Biesenbach, and Negar Azimi, Tiffany Malakooti, and Babak Radboy, of Bidoun, the show is a marvel of archival research and curatorial empathy, paying the kind of attention that Abdoh craved for most of his professional life but had trouble receiving.

In the exhibition's six rooms, monitors flicker with scenes from the nine productions that Abdoh wrote and directed, including "Peep Show" (1988), which was staged in a derelict motel in Los Angeles and featured sometimes scantily clad performers, full of testiness and threat, acting out scenarios about porn, drugs, and the Contras. Two years later, in New York, Abdoh, with his brilliant company, Dar A Luz, devised "Father Was a Peculiar Man," an event that took place in the ungentrified meatpacking district, where the air smelled of offal and the cobblestones were slippery with blood. Amid all that, Abdoh's performers reënacted President Kennedy's assassination; it was a show that tore apart the idea of heteronormative masculinity as strength, as damage.

In 1993, Abdoh premièred "Tight Right White." I saw this show seven times, and remember it in a way that I remember few others. Staged in a loft on Lafayette Street, across from the Public Theatre, the piece used the film adaptation of Kyle Onstott's 1957 novel, "Mandingo," as its primary script. Sitting on cushions on the floor, audience members had to crane their necks to see the proceedings. Enter Moishe Pipik (the amazing Tony Torn), a long-nosed Jewish character in a huckster's checked suit. When he pisses in a pot of earth, a money tree springs up. Moishe has a friend, Blaster, a black teen-age junkie and drug dealer. They're refugees, in a sense—racist and anti-Semitic parodies of Jewish liberal identification with blackness. Sometimes they hang out as if they were on a talk show, their chatter intercut with all that "Mandingo" mess, Mandingo's black phallus looming in the minds of the white people who constructed their dream of an antebellum South on black backs. Like Faulkner before him, Abdoh offered a powerful commentary on how sex drew whites to blacks in the South, but in his version there's nothing sentimental about the characters' choices and fears: they're ruined people, in thrall to the patriarchy.



Abdoh and his partner, Brenden Doyle, in Paris, in 1993.

COURTESY ESTATE OF REZA ABDOH

Walking through the curators' proliferation of words and images—an excellent time line helps to anchor Abdoh's progress from nice Iranian boy to enfant terrible—one realizes that what connects these ghostly works, which now exist only on video and in photographs, reviews, and other ephemera, is sound, sound that floods the show at PS1. Abdoh's characters speak like stock players in early Warner Bros. movies: rat-a-tat-tat go their voices and our nerves, as we hear, over and under those voices, doors slamming, cymbals crashing, a woman screaming, rock music blaring, a television somewhere, alive with static or garish soap operas. Abdoh's aural dissonance was one tool that he used to tell the story he wanted to tell: about the foreigner, the Old World citizen fascinated by America, the New World, with its focus on product, fast times, and early death. Another story he told was that of the rich kid whose privilege was snatched away by politics and who came to regard capital as an illusion. And then, of course, there was his sexuality, which

defied the traditions of the society he was born into and was perceived there with fear and hatred.

Abdoh was born in Tehran in 1963, the first child of Ali and Homa Abdoh. The charismatic Ali had gone to college in America and served in the military; Homa was his second wife, and was fifteen when they married. The year Reza was born, Ali founded the Persepolis Athletic and Cultural Club in Tehran; he also opened Iran's first bowling alley. The Abdohs were acquaintances of the Shah and his wife, Farah Diba. They reared their children on a large estate and travelled frequently to London, where they owned a house. "Living in England was the thing to do for the rich Persians, their claim to fame," Abdoh said in an interview. "It was decadent because there was a lot of money and they didn't know what to do with it." As a kid, Abdoh enlisted his two younger brothers in productions he devised, often dressing them in elaborate costumes. By 1978, he was boarding at England's prestigious Wellington School, where he assisted a professor on several theatrical productions, including Ibsen's "Peer Gynt."

Meanwhile, Iran was changing. In 1979, when the Islamic Republic of Iran was established, Ali Abdoh, who had separated from his wife, took the children to California, where a number of their countrymen had settled. (Iranians in exile began referring to Los Angeles as "Tehrangeles.") Life was different for the Abdohs now. Ali was more or less ruined financially. Reza's younger brothers worked at a gas station, while he enrolled at the University of Southern California. His idea was to major in English, and he did, but for only a semester. Later, he claimed to have completed his course of study and started law school as well. Children lie to protect themselves, but also to boost a self that may feel diminished, unworthy. Spoiled by his mother and deprived of his father's love—Ali had a fatal heart attack on a squash court in 1980—Abdoh was drawn to older gay men who could mentor, love, and support him. Near-destitute at times, he occasionally turned tricks to survive.

In 1983, after staging three plays for the L.A.-based, avant-garde Fifth Estate Theatre, he assisted the director Alan Mandell on a production of one-acts by Samuel Beckett. Mandell had seen Abdoh's apprentice work and wondered what on earth he could teach this wunderkind, who, in the following six years, directed plays by Shakespeare, Sophocles, and David Henry Hwang, and began to put together his own pieces, which were all a kind of reworking of existing texts. One of Abdoh's signature styles as a dramatist was to remake works in his own image. Or in the image of his terrors. An early piece, for instance, "A Medea: Requiem for a Boy with a White White Toy," was freely adapted from Euripides and included lines from Gertrude Stein, Dear Abby, Shakespeare, and whatever else was in Abdoh's imagination.

What was on his mind, from the time he tested positive for H.I.V., in 1988—when he applied for a green card that year under Reagan's Immigration Reform and Control Act, an H.I.V. test was required—was what was happening to the queer body in America. While Abdoh admired endurance directors like Robert Wilson and Peter Sellars, the thing that distinguished his work from theirs was its sexuality. Abdoh didn't rely on metaphors for the gorgeous confusion and frequent disillusionment of being sexual; he showed those things. His actors tore at their skin, slathered their faces with makeup that ran down their shirtfronts or their naked chests, because Abdoh wanted sex to look like sex, not like a polite version of closeness or romance. This was the era in which the National Endowment for the Arts pulled funding from Karen Finley for using her body as the primary text in her monologues, and Jesse Helms pronounced Robert Mapplethorpe's images of black men obscene. Then there was Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ," and, in 1990, Keith Haring dead of AIDS at thirty-one. What to do with this cacophony of pain and horror and ludicrous policing? How to handle all those flickering images of disaster on CNN and the other cable-news programs that Abdoh watched obsessively? Abdoh put them onstage, along with the lies his family had told him about belief in the state and safety and the breakdown of trust in your own body.

Theatre didn't so much save Abdoh's life as reshape it into something more vital, more bearable, more controlled. Abdoh felt that his work could not be performed after his death—and he was right, because the impulses that moved him to destabilize the audience by destabilizing a world that he'd built can't be re-created. His nerve and his nervousness were particular to the chemistry of his own body—a chemistry that, ultimately, failed him. But, until he died, he allowed us to inhabit his righteous and turgid, pure and debased universe, which he filled with the true and fake news of who we were, if only we would listen. ♦

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC. COPYRIGHT ©2018 CONDÉ NAST. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

VOLUME XCIV, NO. 18, June 25, 2018. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: February 12 & 19, June 4 & 11, July 9 & 16, August 6 & 13, and December 24 & 31) by Condé Nast, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: Condé Nast, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. Chris Mitchell, chief business officer; Risa Aronson, vice-president, revenue; James Guilfoyle, executive director of finance and business operations; Fabio Bertoni, general counsel. Condé Nast: Robert A. Sauerberg, Jr., president & chief executive officer; David E. Geithner, chief financial officer; Pamela Drucker Mann, chief revenue and marketing officer. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684, call (800) 825-2510, or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Please give both new and old addresses as printed on most recent label. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year. If during your subscription term or up to one year after the magazine becomes undeliverable, you are ever dissatisfied with your subscription, let us know. You will receive a full refund on all unmailed issues. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks after receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Risa Aronson at (212) 286-4068. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For permissions and reprint requests, please call (212) 630-5656 or fax requests to (212) 630-5883. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online at www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines, visit www.condenast.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

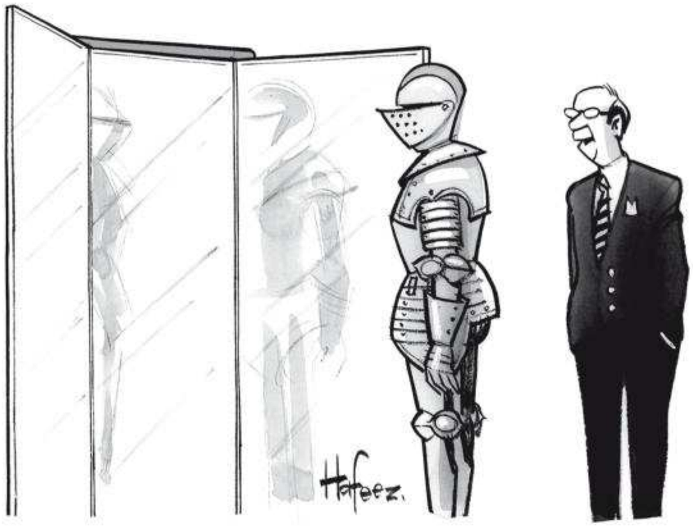
THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS MAGAZINE

CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Kaamran Hafeez, must be received by Sunday, June 24th. The finalists in the June 4th & 11th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 9th & 16th issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



"   "

....

THE FINALISTS

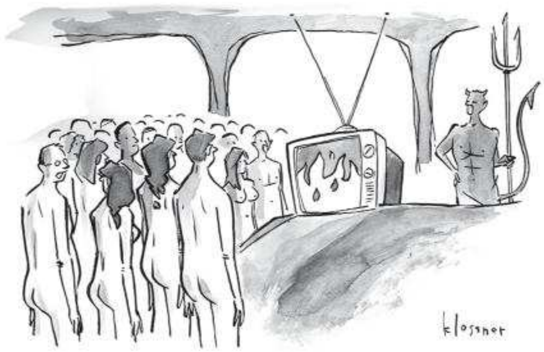


"Arthur, if you can get it out by noon, that'd be great."
Rene Negron, Long Island City, N.Y.

"At least you didn't get the axe."
Peter Sergison, Durham, N.C.

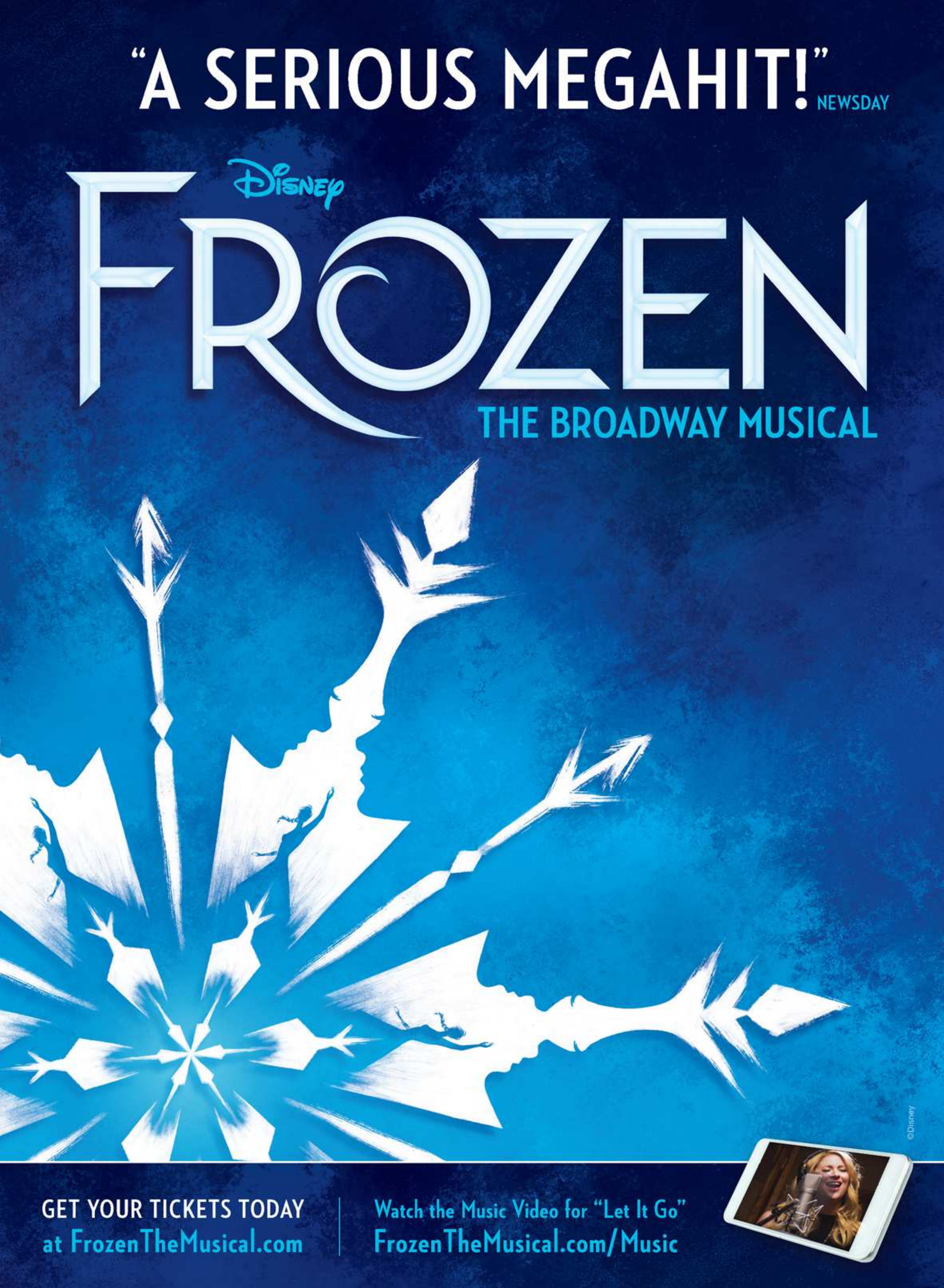
"No, not the sword. The test is to pull out the middle drawer."
Frank Ziegler, Hugo, Minn.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"He makes us watch this fire-safety video once a year."
Daniel Atonna, Montgomery, N.Y.


©2018 America's Biopharmaceutical Companies.
"I keep pursuing new HIV/AIDS treatments
which is why 29 years later, I'm still here."
Brian / HIV/AIDS Researcher
James / HIV/AIDS Patient
In the unrelenting push to defeat HIV/AIDS, scientists' groundbreaking research with brave patients in trials has produced powerful combination antiretroviral treatments, reducing the death rate by 87% since they were introduced. Welcome to the future of medicine. For all of us.
GoBoldly.com
GOBOLDLY
America's Biopharmaceutical Companies


"A SERIOUS MEGAHIT!" NEWSDAY
DISNEY
FROZEN
THE BROADWAY MUSICAL
©Disney
GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY
at FrozenTheMusical.com
Watch the Music Video for "Let It Go"
FrozenTheMusical.com/Music